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IDEAS IN CONTEXT

The Duel IN Early Modern England

CIVILITY,
POLITENESS
AND HONOUR



MARKKU PELTONEN

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THE DUEL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Arguments about the place and practice of the duel in early modern England were widespread. The distinguished intellectual historian Markku Peltonen examines this debate, and shows how the moral and ideological status of duelling was discussed within a much larger cultural context of courtesy, civility and politeness. The advocates of the duel, following Italian and French examples, contended that it maintained and enhanced politeness; its critics by contrast increasingly severed duelling from civility, and this separation became part of a vigorous attempt in the late seventeenth century and beyond to redefine civility, politeness and indeed the nature and evolution of Englishness. The book ends with a detailed and original analysis of Bernard Mandeville's influential theory of politeness, to which duelling was central. To understand the duel is to understand much more fully some crucial issues in the cultural and ideological history of Stuart England, and Markku Peltonen's study will thus engage the attention of a very wide audience of historians, cultural and literary scholars.

MARKKU PELTONEN is Senior Lecturer in General History at the University of Helsinki. His previous publications include *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1995) and he has also edited *The Cambridge Companion to Bacon* (Cambridge, 1996).

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The Duel in Early Modern England

THE DUEL IN EARLY MODERN ENGLAND

Civility, Politeness and Honour

MARKKU PELTONEN



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Introduction

Richard Hey, a fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, wrote in 1784:

Perhaps, however, it will even be urged, that some private Vices are *directly* beneficial to the Public; that the Vice of Luxury, for instance, promotes every useful Art and a general Civilization of Manners. But, whatever Good may in fact arise from any Vice, it is enough to see that the same Good might be produced by other means, if all Vice were taken out of the World.

A highly important issue was clearly at stake. Hey firmly maintained that vices must never be accepted even if they happened to promote a ‘useful Art and a general Civilization of Manners’ simply because these same benefits could always be produced by better means. In particular, Hey was convinced that a ‘Refinement of Manners . . . as an external ornament . . . will spring up as the genuine fruit of the Heart’ – that there was a close link between outward civility and the inner self. The crucial question was not, however, whether luxury was beneficial or detrimental to ‘a general Civilization of Manners’. Luxury was merely Hey’s illustrative example. The real issue at stake was duelling: ‘Arguments therefore in favour of Duelling must be intirely nugatory, even if they can prove that it counteracts the operations of other Vices, or is directly productive of some good Effects.’¹

As Hey’s ruminations suggest, duelling was closely entangled with the larger debate about civility and politeness in early modern England. Hey’s account also indicates that there was a sharp disagreement over whether duelling was beneficial or detrimental to civility. Many agreed with Hey who endeavoured to distance duelling from civility. But we can infer from his urgent need to emphasise this distinction that there were some who argued that duelling, in fact, played a highly beneficial role by enhancing the level of politeness.

¹ Richard Hey, *A dissertation on duelling* (Cambridge, 1784), pp. 93–4.

The aim of this book is to examine the debate about courtesy, civility and politeness from the middle of the sixteenth century until the early eighteenth century on the one hand, and the central role of duelling in that debate on the other. Above all, the book endeavours to study the intellectual context, circumstances and conditions which created, spread and maintained the ideology of duelling in early modern England, and the various ways in which its opponents sought to undermine it.

In Hey's account of civility, politeness sprang up 'as the genuine fruit of the Heart'. He was thus convinced that there was a direct link between one's inner self and appearance. But again his insistence on this interpretation makes it plain that others repudiated it and asserted that there was, and behoved to be, no such link. Many, in fact, argued that politeness was often used to disguise rather than reveal one's inner feelings. It is a central claim, which I attempt to substantiate in this book, that duelling was at the heart of this debate about the proper definition of civility.

The duel of honour was a peculiar social institution of early modern and modern Europe. It was part of a complex though coherent social and ideological phenomenon, which lasted several centuries in most parts of Europe.² There were three distinctive features of modern duels. In the early eighteenth century, John Cockburn pinned down two of these by pointing out that duels were occasioned by 'Piques and private Quarrels' and 'fought secretly without *Publick Licence*'.³ The third central feature of duelling was the irrelevance of the outcome of the fight for the ultimate purpose of the ritual. The duellists were engaged in the fight to demonstrate their sense of honour by being threatened with death rather than to achieve a definite result.⁴ As one nobleman explained to another in 1660, 'He that will Fight, though he have never so much the worse, loses no reputation.'⁵

These three aspects – a private or secret fight, caused by an insult and organised by a challenge in order to prove one's sense of honour rather than to overcome one's opponent – gave the duel of honour its quintessential characteristics. As an anonymous late eighteenth-century commentator defined duelling:

² Schneider 1984, p. 273.

³ John Cockburn, *The history and examination of duels. Shewing their heinous nature and the necessity of suppressing them* (London, 1720), p. xiv.

⁴ See e.g. Frevert 1995, pp. 2–3.

⁵ Henry Pierrepont, marquis of Dorchester, *The lord marquesse of Dorchesters letter to the Lord Roos* (London, 1660), p. 11.

A duel, I think, is a combat between two persons, with danger of their lives, entered into without any public authority for it, in consequence of a challenge given by one of the parties, who imagines that he himself, or some person dear to him, has been affronted by the other, and intends by these means to wipe off the affront that is supposed to have been received.⁶

The duel of honour ultimately derived from various medieval forms of single combat – most importantly from the judicial duel, where the truth of the accusation in a criminal or civil case was ascertained by a trial by battle. The origins of the judicial duel are to be found in Germanic customary law and it was widespread all over the Continent through the early Middle Ages, but absent in England until the Norman Conquest. Trial by combat was used as a last resort to decide whether the defendant was culpable; it was allowable when all the other possibilities had been exhausted.⁷ But the ideas of honour and the lie were soon brought in, although it is hardly necessary to think that honour was always involved.⁸ When someone was accused of a crime, he gave the other the lie by denying the crime;⁹ this riposte brought honour in. Either the plaintiff or the defendant was lying and by offering to fight they vindicated their word and thus their honour. It was the issue of lying that the combat was thought to resolve.¹⁰ More importantly, although the judicial combat was employed in a wide variety of cases, many of them implied an accusation of bad faith. This was the case with charges of treason, perjury and of breaches of agreement.¹¹ The aptness of the combat in such cases is obvious. Robert Bartlett has recently pointed out that ‘charges of treason, breach of truce, or perjury involved not only the imputation of a wrong, but also the implicit accusation of bad faith. In such circumstances an exculpatory oath was clearly not acceptable, for the charge implied that no trust could be placed in the word of the

⁶ [Anon.], *Reflections on duelling, and on the most effectual means for preventing it* (Edinburgh, 1790), p. 4.

⁷ Keen 1984, p. 204. See in general Keen 1965; Neilson 1890.

⁸ This seems to be Pitt-Rivers's view, Pitt-Rivers 1966, p. 28.

⁹ In fourteenth-century France it was debated whether it was incumbent on the defendant to give the plaintiff the lie, Morel 1964, p. 614.

¹⁰ See Morel 1964, pp. 606–7, 614; Pitt-Rivers 1966, p. 32; Montesquieu, *The spirit of the laws*, transl. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge 1989), xxviii, 20, pp. 559–60. According to F. R. Bryson 1935, p. 55 n1, the earliest known use of giving the lie as a prelude to combat is from the ninth century.

¹¹ See e.g. the Lombard law described in F. R. Bryson 1938, p. xv; Morel 1964, p. 633. For the Lombard law concerning duels, see e.g. Giovanni da Legnano, *Tractatus de bello, de represaliis et de duello* (1360), ed. Thomas Erskine Holland, transl. James Leslie Brierly (Washington, D.C., 1917), pp. 344–5; Honoré Bonet, *The tree of battles*, transl. G. W. Coopland (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), pp. 196–8.

accused.¹² The judicial combat was thus closely entangled with bad faith and lying, keeping one's word and honour. It should further be noted that the right to settle one's disputes by combat was closely associated with free status, although it was only in the later Middle Ages that it began to be a distinctive aristocratic activity.¹³

Civilians saw the trial by battle, among many other traditional aspects, as barbarian, but customary law percolated down into the schools, and issues dealing with the judicial duel were widely discussed amongst civil lawyers. In his painstaking study on the evolution of the trial by combat into the duel of honour in France, Henri Morel has argued that the origins of the theory of the point of honour lay in the Bartolist legal tradition where it was asserted that for a duel to be allowed it had to be shown that the honour of at least one of the party was at stake. It was above all Baldus de Ubaldis who, despite his own prevarication, became the chief authority for later generations of jurists in matters of the duel. Sometimes Baldus argued that although the trial by combat is allowed by the customary laws, it was against 'humanity' and 'natural reason', and thus strictly forbidden by the civil and canon law.¹⁴ But elsewhere he argued that 'for the defense of honour' it was permissible.¹⁵ In the middle of the fourteenth century Giovanni da Legnano, another civil lawyer, gave what must have been a standard list of three different kinds of combat. The fight could be fought for 'compurgation, glory, or exaggeration of hatred'.¹⁶

Despite medieval precedents, the duel of honour was essentially a Renaissance creation. As many recent scholars have emphasised, during the first half of the sixteenth century the medieval forms of single combat were refashioned in Italy into a duel of honour which replaced the vendetta.¹⁷ This development has been seen as a civilising process, because it decreased the level of violence: a gentleman's honour became private, individual, and he was no longer obliged to continue the old cycles of revenge. Underlying the duel was thus a new notion of honour, which required a novel form of behaviour.¹⁸

¹² Bartlett 1986, pp. 106–8, citation p. 108. See also Keen 1984, p. 175; P. Brown 1975.

¹³ Bartlett 1986, pp. 109–10, 125.

¹⁴ Baldus de Ubaldis, *Consiliorum, sive responsorum* (5 vols., Venice, 1575), II, consilium, clxv, fo. 44^r; consilium, ccxlvii, fo. 71^r; consilium, cccxliii, fos. 96^r–v.

¹⁵ Cited in Morel 1964, p. 634.

¹⁶ Legnano, *Tractatus*, p. 331. See also Nicholas Upton, *The essential portions of Nicholas Upton's De studio militari*, transl. John Blount, ed. Francis Pierrepont Barnard (Oxford, 1931), pp. 9–22; Bonet, *The tree of battles*, pp. 206–7. Cf. F. R. Bryson 1938, p. xi.

¹⁷ For recent studies, see Erspamer 1982; Muir 1993; Muir 1994; Weinstein 1994; Quint 1997.

¹⁸ Muir 1994, pp. 76, 78; Quint 1997, p. 265.

Therefore, from the very beginning the duel of honour was an integral part of the new Renaissance ideology of courtesy and civility. It was created within a new court culture, where the prime emphasis was placed on sophisticated manners and where courtiers and gentlemen were compelled to control and repress their emotions. The code enforced the requirement that courtiers and gentlemen be agreeable and pleasing to one another. This entailed both the cultivation of the virtue of honest dissimulation and the avoidance of meaningful discourse in conversation. As Edward Muir has pointed out, 'it became discourteous to be truthful', while at the same time accusing someone of lying was by far the most serious insult, which immediately questioned a gentleman's honour.¹⁹ Within such an ideology duelling was seen as the only legitimate option for protecting the gentleman's tarnished honour.²⁰

Both the Renaissance theory of duelling and the wider ideology of Renaissance courtesy were in large part creations of the printing press. During the second third of the sixteenth century many Italian presses were busily publishing dozens of treatises and manuals on courtesy and nobility, honour and the duel, which all elaborated various aspects of *la scienza cavalleresca*. This flood of treatises on honour and duelling not merely codified new manners and theories; it also helped to limit the level of aristocratic violence in a very real sense. The code of courtesy in general and that of duelling in particular became so elaborate that it often replaced the actual fight altogether. The sophisticated and highly publicised charges and countercharges, challenges and ripostes substituted for the duel, to such an extent that the very success of the duelling manuals has been offered as a reason for the decline of duelling in Italy.²¹ As Donald Weinstein has recently pointed out,

The duel scenario is poorly understood if we consider one part of it as form and the other as substance, the exchange of *cartelli* as play-acting and the exchange of blows as the real thing. At least as it developed in Italy after the middle of the sixteenth century, both words and action were part of the contest, the aim of which was to shame one's enemies and to defend, display and enhance one's own honour. The duel imagined (and avoided) was as real and as serious as the

¹⁹ Muir 1994, pp. 80–1; Muir 1997, pp. 121–2, 141–4.

²⁰ Muir 1993, pp. 252–6; Muir 1994, pp. 76, 78; Quint 1997, pp. 233, 265. See also F. R. Bryson 1938; F. R. Bryson 1935; Erspamer 1982; For France see Billacois 1986; Herr 1955; Bennetton 1938; Morel 1964; Schneider 1984; G. A. Kelly 1986; Nye 1990. For Germany see Frevert 1995; McAleer 1994; Deak 1986. For the South of the United States see Wyatt-Brown 1982; Greenberg 1985; Stowe 1987, ch. 1; Greenberg 1996. For Ireland see J. Kelly 1995; J. Kelly 1994; Barry 1981. For Russia see Reyfman 1999.

²¹ Billacois 1986, pp. 76–7; see Weinstein 1994, p. 215; Becker 1988, p. 33.

duel fought; conversely, the exchange of blows was as much theatre and play as the exchange of arguments and insults. Both were virtuoso performances acted before 'the world' of gentlemen and cavaliers, the world that counted most.²²

Although the close link between the novel theory of courtesy and the ideology of duelling in Renaissance Italy is well established and widely accepted, numerous commentators in France and England have strongly contrasted them. Taking their cue from students of the ideology of absolutism, they have seen duelling exclusively as an inheritance from the medieval world of knights and pitted it against the emerging theory of civility. L. W. B. Brockliss has recently claimed that whilst duelling was in France a way 'to channel and control the endemic violence of the court', its ideology was nonetheless derived from 'late-medieval concepts of honour'. 'It was only towards the mid-seventeenth century', Brockliss goes on, 'that courtiers finally began to judge each other by the polish of their manners rather than by their pugnacity and brio'.²³ In more general European terms, John Adamson sets duelling as part of 'an inherited value-system' over against new 'courtly *politesse*' and 'decorum'.²⁴

A similar analysis has dominated the scholarly work on civility and duelling in early modern England.²⁵ True, in Lawrence Stone's account of the early modern English aristocracy, duelling occupies a small but distinctive place in the process from endemic brawling and violence in the Middle Ages to the more controlled forms of violence in early modern England. Stone attributed this development to a variety of causes, one of which was a change in the prevalent honour code. 'In the early seventeenth century', he concluded, 'the duel thus succeeded in diverting the nobility from faction warfare with armed gangs without leading to a dislocation of social intercourse by incessant fighting over trivial slights, real or imagined'.²⁶

²² Weinstein 1994, p. 217, in general pp. 215–20; Quint 1997, pp. 248–9, 257–63; Muir 1993, pp. 264–70.

²³ Brockliss 1999, p. 294. ²⁴ Adamson 1999a, pp. 20–1. See also Chaline 1999, pp. 87–8.

²⁵ No comprehensive historical studies on duelling in England have appeared since the middle of the nineteenth century. For the earlier scholarship see Hamilton 1829; Millingen 841; Steinmetz 1868; Truman 1884. For particular cases see Bowers 1937a; Bowers 1937b; Andrew 1980; McCord Jr. 2000; Stater 1999. For general but rather anecdotal and impressionistic references to duelling see e.g. Sieveking 1916; Sieveking 1917; Bowers 1934; C. L. Barber 1957, pp. 18, 27, 273–5; Akrigg 1962, pp. 248–58; Thomas 1965; Maxwell 1966, pp. 84–106; Bowers 1971, pp. 31–4; Broude 1975; Girouard 1981, p. 60; Malcolm 1981; Loose 1982; Butler 1984; Clark 1985, pp. 109–16; Strachan 1989, pp. 12, 42, 68; MacCaffrey 1991, p. 26; Gilmour 1992, pp. 263–83; Thomas 1993, p. 48; Loades 1997, pp. 116–17; Gaskill 2000, pp. 209–10.

²⁶ Stone 1965, pp. 242–50, 223–34, citation, p. 250; see also Stone and Stone 1984, p. 409; Stone 1987, p. 302. For an excellent brief summary of Stone's argument see Cust 1999. I am grateful to Richard Cust for allowing me to read and cite his unpublished work.

Yet, despite Stone's analysis where the duel of honour was juxtaposed with the much more chaotic and endemic aristocratic violence of the Middle Ages, more recent commentators have sought its ideological context in the medieval honour community and more particularly in the Elizabethan chivalric revival.²⁷ Such a view became easier to sustain once the Elizabethan chivalric revival was no longer seen as merely strengthening the Tudor monarchy through its conventions of feudal loyalty and romantic devotion, but rather as an outlet for aristocratic pride, magnanimity and belligerency.²⁸

This perspective has led several scholars to insist that the duel of honour was essentially an inheritance from the ideology of England's chivalrous past. Distinguishing between 'the Christian humanist ideal of honor' and 'the neo-chivalric cult of honor', Paul N. Siegel has argued that whereas the former was expounded in the courtesy books and the works of moral philosophy, the latter stemmed 'from the chivalric notion of personal military glory', consisted of 'the artificial rules of a decadent chivalry' and was expounded in the duelling treatises.²⁹ Similarly, for Richard McCoy, the challenges and single combats of Elizabethan aristocrats were epitomes of the chivalrous 'rites of knighthood'; they were outlets for chivalric pride and magnanimity.³⁰

The strongest analysis to this effect has been offered by Mervyn James in his wide-ranging essay, 'English politics and the concept of honour, 1485–1642'.³¹ One of the central themes of James's essay is to describe the transformation of the medieval concept of honour into a modern one. The medieval concept of honour was characterised by 'a stress on competitive assertiveness'. In the sixteenth century it underwent a transformation, which resulted in the emergence of 'a "civil" society in which the monopoly both of honour and violence by the state was asserted'.³² It was, in other words, a transformation from a freedom of feudal belligerency of the knights into a state where violence as well as honour were the sole domain of the monarch. James's account resists a glib explanation of the birth of a centralised absolutist state. According to him, key ideological roles in this transformation were played by Protestantism and humanism rather than the concrete 'order-keeping forces at the disposal of the state'. 'Civil order', he argues, 'depended,

²⁷ Ferguson 1986. ²⁸ McCoy 1989, pp. 1–27. For the older view see Yates 1977, pp. 88–111.

²⁹ Siegel 1964, pp. 40–7. See also Mason 1935, pp. 8–10.

³⁰ McCoy 1989, especially p. 58. See also McCoy 1996.

³¹ Mervyn James 1986, pp. 308–415. The essay was originally published in 1978. Shapin 1994, p. 108, accepts James's interpretation. Cf. also Cust 1995a, pp. 80–1.

³² Mervyn James 1986, pp. 308–9.

to a much greater extent than in the bureaucratized societies of a later age, on the effective internalization of obedience, the external sanctions being so often unreliable.³³ A central element in the old chivalric idea of honour was its closeness to violence. In wartime this quality was directed to martial prowess but in time of peace it became self-assertiveness, which was always liable to escalate to a violent expression of the duel.³⁴ In James's account, therefore, the duel was one of the most 'characteristic expressions' of 'honour violence', of the knightly code of honour, as exemplified by Sir Philip Sidney's proneness to challenge the earl of Oxford.³⁵

This account has met with wide acceptance. For many a scholar the duelling theory was by and large a remnant from the ideology of the medieval honour community.³⁶ Since 1978, when James's study was published, the honour culture of early modern England has been thoroughly examined. Following anthropological work on honour, historians of early modern England have emphasised the ubiquity and central importance of honour and reputation not only for the male elite but also for many other social groups as well. They had meaning and significance both in the private sphere of the household and in the public sphere beyond it. At the same time historians have also stressed that the notions of honour and reputation could differ significantly between various social groups.³⁷

Whilst recent scholars have expanded the area which honour and reputation occupied in early modern England, they have also questioned James's rather neat transition from one honour culture to another, and in its stead have perceived multi-vocality. 'Reading early modern authors on the subject of honour', Cynthia Herrup has recently written, 'what comes through most strongly is not transition, but multi-vocality, even self-contradiction.'³⁸ Historians have in other words challenged James's rather linear story of modernisation.³⁹ But in so far as duelling and its ideology are concerned, this conclusion has merely confirmed James's earlier analysis. It is the clear-cut transition from one honour

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 358. ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 310–14. ³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 322, 387.

³⁶ Keen 1984, pp. 249–50; Keith M. Brown 1986, pp. 203–7; Richard Barber 1970, pp. 175–7; Pinciss 1978; Guy 1995, p. 7; Ferguson 1960, pp. 13–14; Ferguson 1986, pp. 96–7, 111–12; Day 1995; Heal 1996.

³⁷ Marston 1973; Fletcher 1985; Dabhoiwala 1996; Foyster 1996; Gowing 1996; Heal 1996; Herrup 1996; Llewellyn 1996; Walker 1996. For an earlier French example see Farge 1989. For an excellent recent summary see Smuts 1999, pp. 8–17, which perceptively avoids the dichotomy between medieval honour culture and early modern politeness culture.

³⁸ Herrup 1996, p. 138. See also Herrup 1999, p. 77.

³⁹ For a recent critique of James's analysis of the Tudor north see Palmer 2000.

culture to another which is called in doubt, not the definitions of these cultures. Duelling in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century has still been taken as a clear sign of the vitality of an earlier honour culture which allegedly demonstrates multi-vocality. Little wonder then that duelling is habitually described as a 'neo-feudal' custom.⁴⁰ When the earl of Essex was 'fighting duels' he not only 'proselytized his belief in the nobility's right to use violence in the defence of honour'; he also expressed 'the neo-feudal dimension' of his self-fashioned image.⁴¹ And Lord Eure's fashionable education, his employment by the government and his European tour have recently been juxtaposed (rather than linked) with his propensity to duelling, which ostensibly was part of his 'general sympathy for the old faith, and an acceptance of the violent elements of the honour code'.⁴² To embrace a code of honour which required a gentleman to defend his reputation by a challenge was tantamount to exhibiting 'many features associated with the age of chivalry'.⁴³ Although Steven Shapin associates the duelling theory with civil conversation, he nonetheless argues that 'chivalric honour culture' underlay duelling.⁴⁴ Similarly, in her study on the early modern notions of civility, Anna Bryson notes that the duelling theory was a recent import from Italy, but sees the wider ideology in which it was embedded as 'left over' from the late medieval political world.⁴⁵

If courtesy and civility are widely seen as important cultural and intellectual themes of Elizabethan and early Stuart England, similar concepts occupy an even more central place in the historiography of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. As Lawrence Klein has put it, 'in later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, the term "politeness" came into particular prominence as a key word'.⁴⁶

Although some commentators of Restoration and Augustan politeness acknowledge the obvious links with their subject-matter on the one hand and the earlier tradition of courtesy and civility on the other, it has become characteristic to emphasise its essential novelty. Some commentators have spoken about 'the Progress of Politeness',⁴⁷ whilst others, such as Klein, have gone so far as to call "'politeness" a new definition of

⁴⁰ Heal and Holmes 1994, p. 5. In general Fletcher 1985; Hibbard 1996; Amussen 1995, pp. 294, 221–2.

⁴¹ Guy 1995, p. 7. ⁴² Heal 1996, p. 174.

⁴³ Cust 1995b, p. 92; see also Cust 1995a, pp. 80–1, Cust 1999, pp. 1–2; Heal and Holmes 1994, pp. 18–19.

⁴⁴ Shapin 1994, pp. 107–14, especially pp. 107, 108. ⁴⁵ Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 272–5, 236–7.

⁴⁶ Klein 1994, p. 3. For a recent general critique see Berry 2001.

⁴⁷ Barker-Benfield 1992, pp. 78–9.

gentility'.⁴⁸ Many recent commentators agree, so much so that a notion of 'a rise in the ideal of "civility"' in the period has quickly established itself as a commonplace.⁴⁹ 'New standards of conduct', we have been told, 'were introduced for men, particularly those from the urban middle and upper classes, which placed a high value on restraint, civility and refined public conversation'.⁵⁰ Another recent commentator maintains that 'the period [1660–1800] saw the emergence of an explicitly innovative concept of social refinement – politeness', and goes on talking about 'a new culture of politeness'.⁵¹

One of the central features underlying the novelty of politeness, many of these commentators argue, was its distaste of old-fashioned honour culture. Just as many scholars juxtapose the emergent culture and ideology of courtesy and civility with the lingering culture of honour and violence (including duelling as its offspring) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, so commentators of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century contrast novel politeness with older honour culture. According to Barker-Benfield, 'the pressure against dueling' in the early eighteenth century illustrates the rapid progress of politeness.⁵² And Robert Shoemaker concurs.⁵³ Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen link duelling with the declining notions of male honour and characterise the Restoration and Augustan rise of politeness as 'the gradual displacement of the concept of honour by the concept of civility'.⁵⁴ Peter Burke has also recently witnessed a shift from 'the "honour system"', with duelling as its chief characteristic, to 'the "politeness system"', and Philip Carter claims that duelling was incompatible with politeness.⁵⁵

It is a chief aim of this book to seek to question these increasingly prevalent accounts. The difficulty in dovetailing these claims of the neat early modern transition from an honour culture to a politeness culture with the fact that duelling was, of course, an early modern and modern phenomenon, lasting from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, should make us wary. No less complicated is the bracketing of the chronology of these assessments with the fact that the most vigorous and sophisticated theoretical defence of duelling took place in the early eighteenth century,

⁴⁸ Klein 1993b, p. 77. See also Klein 1994, pp. 3–14. Cf. Klein 1995b, p. 228, where he acknowledges the connection to the earlier tradition of courtesy and civility.

⁴⁹ E.g. Hitchcock and Cohen 1999, p. 14; Burke 2000. ⁵⁰ Shoemaker 1999, p. 137.

⁵¹ Carter 2001, pp. 1, 80; see generally pp. 1–2, 23–4, 32–4, 210.

⁵² Barker-Benfield 1992, pp. 79–80.

⁵³ Shoemaker 1999, pp. 136–9, 142, 145, 147–8. See also Foyster 1999b, pp. 35–6, 179–81.

⁵⁴ Hitchcock and Cohen 1999, pp. 14–15.

⁵⁵ Burke 2000, pp. 37, 46; Carter 2001, pp. 71–2, 133–4, 182, 214. See also Gregory 1999, p. 98.

when the broader culture in which it was allegedly embedded had surely disappeared. And Bernard Mandeville's argument that, according to 'the *Beau Monde*', 'Virtue . . . chiefly consists in a strict Compliance to the Rules of Politeness, and all the Laws of Honour',⁵⁶ seems to make no sense at all in the interpretative framework of these accounts. If nothing else, at least the fact that the same kind of claims about the transition from an honour culture to a politeness culture have been widely put forward for both the turn of the seventeenth century and of the eighteenth century should give us pause.

Although modern scholarship has strongly linked duelling with the medieval culture of knightly honour, as soon as we turn to the earliest historical accounts of duelling and its ideological context, written in the eighteenth century, we encounter a strikingly different story. In them the distinction between medieval trial by combat and the modern duel was particularly strong. When John Cockburn wrote the first comprehensive history of duelling in English in the early eighteenth century he was adamant in distinguishing '*Modern Duels*' as clearly as possible from earlier single combats in general and from trial by combat in particular, and 'alleged that there are no Instances here of *Modern Duels*, before the *Reformation*'.⁵⁷ A few years later Matthew Concanen came to a very similar conclusion,⁵⁸ and contemporary dictionaries also drew the same distinction.⁵⁹

In 1773 a critic of duelling juxtaposed the duel of honour with trial by combat,⁶⁰ whilst William Scott wrote in 1774 that duels

in *former* ages of the World, were founded partly upon the excellent Principles 'of Humanity and Justice' – 'the honour of Nations' – 'trials of Right' – or 'vindications of Innocence', and on these accounts *not* unlawful: Whereas those of the *last* and *present* Age . . . being founded upon absurd and false '*Points of Honour*,' as they are call'd, but, in fact, '*Points of INFAMY and DIS-honour!*' and therefore *utterly* unlawfull!⁶¹

⁵⁶ Bernard Mandeville, *The fable of the bees or private vices publick benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1988), II, p. 12.

⁵⁷ John Cockburn, *The history*, pp. xiii–xiv. See also ch. vi, which is reprinted in John Cockburn, *The history of duels* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1888), II, pp. 43–54.

⁵⁸ [Matthew Concanen], *The speculatist. A collection of letters and essays, moral and political, serious and humorous* (London, 1730), pp. 69–70. See also John Disney, *A view of ancient laws, against immorality and profaneness* (Cambridge 1729), pp. 317–21.

⁵⁹ s.v. duel in N[athan] Bailey, *An universal etymological English dictionary* (London, 1721); George Gordon, *Dictionarum Britannicum: or a more compleat universal etymological English dictionary* (London, 1736); Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences*, 2nd edn (London, 1738).

⁶⁰ [Anon.], *Thoughts on duelling* (Cambridge, 1773), p. 11.

⁶¹ William Scott, *The duellist, a bravo to God, and a coward to man* (London, 1774), pp. v–vi.

Yet another critic maintained in 1779 that a description of medieval knightly combat merely served 'to shew the total difference between their combats and our modern Duels'.⁶² Still in 1823 a Scot noted that 'all authorities are agreed that duelling is a practice of comparatively modern origin' and went on to contrast it with medieval trial by combat.⁶³

Of course, most of these writers had their own polemical axes to grind. Yet even in the sixteenth or seventeenth century there is strikingly little evidence that duelling was developed from chivalric sources. On the contrary, the duel of honour came to England under the strong influence of the Italian Renaissance. The contemporaries were convinced that duelling was neither old nor homebred, but a recent import from the Continent. In some French works translated into English in the 1580s, it was argued that 'they are greatly deceived' who thought that duelling was an old custom. 'For it is not yet fortie yeeres', the author continued, 'since quarels were rare among Gentlemen.'⁶⁴ 'In old time', wrote another French author in the 1580s, 'wordes were neuer reuenged but by wordes, and neuer came to handstrokes.'⁶⁵ In Lodovick Bryskett's *A discourse of civill life* (written in the 1580s) 'Captaine Norreis' pointed out that 'this matter of the lie giuing and taking [i.e. duelling], is growne of late among vs'.⁶⁶ Thomas Churchyard claimed in 1593 that duelling was something which 'our old Fathers' had not taught to us; indeed it was scarcely known at all 'till our youth beganne to trauell straunge Countreys, and so brought home strange manners'. His contemporaries, however, did nothing but sought for 'an Italian lie' so that they could 'fight in a sharppe'. In the good old days some differences had indeed been decided by 'swords of one length and heart of equal courage', but only 'fewe' had been 'put to foile' although 'many' had been 'worthely esteemed for their value'. The new Italian habit seemed to present a harsh contrast to this: duels were picked very easily, 'maintained with such terror, and ended with such madnes'; 'the rapier and dagger dispatcheth a man quickly'.

⁶² [Anon.], *A short treatise upon the propriety and necessity of duelling* (Bath, 1779), p. 14. See also Hey, *A dissertation on duelling*, pp. 35–7; [William Walsh], *Letters and poems, amorous and gallant* (London, 1692), p. 3; 'Bedford' [pseudonym] 1939, pp. 217–18.

⁶³ George Buchan, *Remarks on duelling; comprising observations on the arguments in defence of that practice* (Edinburgh, 1823), p. 2. Cf. however George Grenville, *An essay on duelling* (Buckingham, 1807), pp. 2–3, 16–19.

⁶⁴ François de La Noue, *The politicke and militarie discourses*, transl. E[dward] A[ggard] (London, 1587), p. 159.

⁶⁵ Mathieu Coignet, *Politique discourses vpon trveth and lying*, transl. Edward Hoby (London, 1586), p. 50.

⁶⁶ Lodovick Bryskett, *A discourse of civill life* (London, 1606), p. 65.

Churchyard was convinced that duelling represented a radical recent change in men's habits – 'a new deuised wilfulnesse'.⁶⁷

When James I and his ministers became alarmed about duels in the 1610s, this same view acted as the basis of their explanations for their increased frequency. Duels were imported from the Continent, and it was only the soft spot the English had for novel and strange things which might account for this menacing development. In his proclamation 'against private Challenges and Combats', James I declared that all those who properly understood these matters 'must acknowledge that this bravery, was first borne and bred in Forraine parts; but after conuaied over into this Island, as many other hurtfull and unlawfull Wares are oftentimes in close packs, that never had the Seale of the places from whence they were brought to warrant them'.⁶⁸ Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton, spoke for many when he compared 'forraine mischiefes with homebred accidents' to the detriment of the former.⁶⁹ A case in point is Francis Bacon who in his anti-duelling argument searched for the ideological origins of the duel of honour from fashionable Italian and French pamphlets rather than the indigenous past.⁷⁰ 'In this corner of the world', exclaimed Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan*, duelling was 'a custome not many years since begun'.⁷¹

One of the central theses of this book is, consequently, that the ideology of duelling (and thus a distinct notion of honour) not only emerged in England as part of the theory of courtesy and civility but throughout its history retained its central role in that theory. Far from being a remnant from medieval honour culture which a new humanist culture of civility replaced, the duel of honour came to England as part of the Italian Renaissance notion of the gentleman and courtier. As soon as the Italianate ideology of courtesy and civility began to be adopted in England, the duel of honour immediately followed suit. I examine these themes in chapter 1, where I discuss the new Renaissance conception of

⁶⁷ Thomas Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge* (London, 1593), pp. 59–60. Cf. e.g. John Norden, *The mirror of honor* (London, 1597), pp. 24–5.

⁶⁸ *Stuart royal proclamations*, ed. James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes (2 vols., Oxford, 1973), I, p. 307.

⁶⁹ [Henry Howard, earl of Northampton], *A publication of his majesties edict, and severe censure against priuate combats and combatants* (London, 1613), p. 13. See also William Wiseman, *The Christian knight* (London, 1619), sigs. vi^v–2^r.

⁷⁰ Francis Bacon, *The charge of Sir Francis Bacon knight, his maiesties Attourney Generall, touching duells* (London, 1614), p. 10. In 1616 he mentioned two well-known Renaissance chivalric romances, *Amadis de Gaule* and *Palmerin d'Oliua*, *The letters and the life of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding (7 vols., London, 1862–74), VI, p. 109.

⁷¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge, 1991), p. 207.

courtesy, its notion of honour and the attendant concept of duelling. As well as analysing the duelling theory and its intellectual context, I also examine its ideological significance. It is often assumed that the main ideological aim of the Renaissance culture of courtesy was pleasing the prince, but, as I argue, the pivotal role of duelling in it indicates that it also contained elements which were said to undermine both the principles of Christianity and the prince's authority.

Whilst many were anxious to embrace this new ideology, a backlash soon followed and from the 1590s onwards there was a growing criticism of the duelling theory, which forms the theme of chapter 2. One of the earliest substantial bodies of criticism against the duel came from those quarters from which many recent commentators have sought its origins. These critics used their accounts of traditional indigenous forms of combat in order to refute the import of the fashionable Italian duel of honour. The anti-duelling criticism became most vociferous, however, during the second decade of the seventeenth century when James I launched his sustained campaign against duelling. An important part of this campaign was to maintain Christian principles and the monarch's authority against the duelling theory. Several critics also flatly denied that duelling was part of courteous behaviour or that it enhanced the general level of politeness in society. They found any such claim simply abominable, and for them single combats were nothing but traits of barbaric behaviour. Other critics attempted to belittle the importance of courtesy and civility, poking fun at many aspects of the courtesy theory. When Walter Raleigh insisted that all those who performed small impolitenesses or uttered slightly impolite words should not be 'civilized with death', he was not putting forward an unfathomable oxymoron. He was merely trying to question a widely held principle which closely associated courtesy and civility with the duel of honour.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 examine the developments of these themes in Restoration and Augustan England. This means that I pay only passing attention to the period of the Civil War and the Interregnum. But this, in turn, is not to imply that the upheavals of the middle of the century were negligible if one were to write a social history of duelling in early modern England. There were numerous duels during these decades. The available evidence suggests that there were more affairs of honour and duels amongst royalists but they also occurred amongst parliamentarians, so much so that an ordinance against duelling was published in 1654. It can also be argued that the high level of violence in the middle of the century contributed to the increased number of duels later in the century.

My decision not to devote more space to the 1640s and 1650s as such follows from the fact that their contributions to the early modern theoretical debate about civility and duelling were rather limited. One of the more important interventions in this debate is to be found in Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651). I briefly examine *Leviathan* (and other texts from the middle of the century) in the Restoration context, because its Latin edition, amongst whose most significant revisions were those of duelling, appeared for the first time in 1668.

Chapter 3 discusses the accounts of civility and politeness in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England, and whilst acknowledging several novel features in them, it emphasises their links to and continuities with the Elizabethan and Jacobean interpretations of courtesy and civility. Some of these accounts, I argue, still rendered the defence of duelling possible, and the second part of chapter 3 traces such arguments in detail. Nevertheless, at the same time as duelling was still sometimes upheld within the theory of civility, an entirely novel way in which a highly positive image of duelling was constructed started to emerge. While its role in promoting politeness was still often acknowledged, in this new conception the duel gradually became a central characteristic of *Englishness* and *Britishness*. Duelling became for many one of the cultural institutions which underpinned the free form of government and the valour of the Britons, their idiosyncrasy and thus their ultimate superiority.

The fourth chapter examines the anti-duelling arguments in Restoration and Augustan England. The first part gives a historical account of the anti-duelling campaigns, while the political and religious arguments are the theme of the second part. I then move to investigate the anti-duelling arguments which were put forward within the larger context of civility. Underlying these arguments was a vigorous attempt to redefine civility. A central emphasis in this redefinition was placed on the demand for a close relationship between inner virtue and morality on the one hand and external civility and politeness on the other. The most important anti-duelling arguments in Restoration and Augustan England should be seen as an integral part of this redefinition of civility. For many critics duelling most glaringly epitomised this entire fallacious conception of civility.

The fifth chapter finally uses all the preceding chapters as an intellectual context for an examination of Bernard Mandeville's expositions of civility, honour and duelling. Its central argument is not only that this context helps us understand Mandeville's accounts, but also that in his

vigorous defence of duelling Mandeville turns back to the earlier definitions of civility. Mandeville's defence of duelling as a chief means of maintaining and promoting politeness, I contend, was essentially a return to the earlier incorporation of duelling within civility. There is, in short, a direct ideological path from the sixteenth-century Italian theory of civility and duelling to Bernard Mandeville's early eighteenth-century account of the central role of politeness, honour and duelling in the development of luxury and commerce.

*The rise of civil courtesy and the duelling theory
in Elizabethan and early Stuart England*

CIVIL COURTESY

In 1549 William Thomas, a scholar who had just returned from his five years' stay in Italy, published *The historie of Italie*. Dedicating the volume to the earl of Warwick, Thomas noted that 'the Italian nacion . . . semeth to flourishe in ciuillitee moste of all other at this date'. Later in his work Thomas described the Italian customs in the following manner:

And generally (a few citees excepted) in maners and condicions they are no lesse agreable than in theyr speeche: so honourable, so courtesie, so prudente, and so graue withall, that it shoulde seeme eche one of them to haue had a princely bringing vp. To his superiour obedient, to his equall humble, and to his inferiour gentill and courtesie, amiable to a straunger, and desyrous with courtesie to winne his loue.¹

There were two momentous consequences of this courtesy. First, 'a straunger can not be better entreteigned, nor more honourable entreated than amongst the Italians'. Secondly, the Italians were 'sobre of speeche', but also 'enemies of ill reporte, and so tendre ouer their owne good name (whiche they call theyr honour)' that 'who so euer speaketh ill of one of them, shall die for it, if the partie sklaundered maie know it, and finde tyme and place to do it'. The Italians' disposition to private revenges had been responsible for the fact 'that few gentilmen goe abroad vnrmed'.² Moreover, 'if one gentilman', Thomas wrote, 'happen to defame another, many tymes the defamed maketh his defiaunce by a writte called *Cartello*, and openly chalengeth the defamer to fight in campe: so that there are seen sometyme woorthy trialles betwene them'.³ Was this habit of duelling reprehensible? Of course, Thomas admitted, there

¹ William Thomas, *The historie of Italie* (London, 1549), sig. A2^r, fos. 3^v–4^r. For a short account of Thomas and his debt to Renaissance Italy see Donaldson 1988, pp. 40–4. Donaldson does not discuss *The historie of Italie*. For a later view see Richard Lassels, *The voyage of Italy, or a compleat journey through Italy. In two parts* (Paris, 1670), pp. 10–14.

² Thomas, *The historie of Italie*, fo. 4^r. ³ *Ibid.*

were some who 'dooe discommende theim', but, he argued, 'mine opinion dooeth rather allow than blame them'. The benefits of duelling were obvious. As Thomas put it, 'the scare of suche daungers maketh men so ware of theyr tounge, that a man maie goe xx yeres through Italie without findyng reproche or vilanie, vnlesse he prouoke it hym selfe'.⁴

At the time when Thomas wrote this remarkable passage its message seemed rather foreign to the English and few, if any, paid close attention to it. Yet, a few decades later its impact might have been completely different. In this passage Thomas put forward several views which would become central to the entire duelling tradition. First, duelling was described as a relatively new phenomenon. Second, Thomas argued that unfailing courtesy and a penchant for duelling went hand in hand. Third, not only was duelling perceived as an integral part of courtesy, but it was even said to enhance the general level of civility within gentlemanly society. Moreover, both the exceptionally high level of politeness and the concomitant aptitude for duelling were seen as a peculiarly Italian phenomenon. Although modern commentators of civility have mostly ignored Thomas, none of his points were lost on the subsequent generations of Englishmen. Finally, it was perhaps only natural that Thomas, a great admirer of Italy, found duelling a highly commendable social custom.

The duel of honour and its theory came to England as part of the Italian Renaissance notion of the gentleman and courtier. The duel of honour, in other words, emerged as an integral part of the Italian Renaissance theory of courtesy. There had of course been a long medieval tradition of courtesy books and also a distinctively Christian tradition of civility whose origins are to be found in monastic and clerical rules of conduct. This Christian tradition of civility or discipline was embraced by both the Catholics and the Protestants alike but was especially strong amongst the latter who promoted it as a religious and moral ideal.⁵ The most famous and influential work in this tradition was Erasmus' *De civilitate morum puerilium*, first published in 1530 and translated into English as early as 1532. Yet during the latter part of the sixteenth century there was in England a sudden rise of Italian courtesy manuals and guides which were chiefly meant for aristocratic and gentlemanly consumption.⁶ The first and by far the most popular and influential of these treatises was

⁴ Ibid. See also Fynes Moryson, *An itinerary* (London, 1617), pt III, pp. 25–6.

⁵ Knox 1995, Knox 1991.

⁶ For a general survey of courtesy and civility in early modern England see now Anna Bryson 1998; Anna Bryson 1990; Curtin 1985. For the centrality of civility for women see Mendelson 2000. For earlier scholarship see Kelso 1929; Ustick 1932; Mason 1935.

of course Thomas Hoby's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528) under the title *The book of the courtier*, first published as early as in 1561 and reprinted in English in 1577, 1588 as well as 1603 and issued in Latin six times between 1571 and 1612.⁷ Although Castiglione only mentioned duelling in passing, this time the message was not lost on the English. Thirty years later one English writer pointed out that if one wanted to know more about duelling and the concomitant notion of honour, one could do worse than peruse Castiglione's book. 'The Earle Balthazar Castilio in his booke of the Courtier', the Englishman wrote, 'doth among other qualities requireable in a gentleman, specially aduise he should bee skillfull in the knowing of Honor, and causes of quarrell.'⁸

Other works which offered a strikingly similar account of the gentlemanly and courtly code of conduct and which examined the duel of honour included Philibert de Vienne's satirical *The philosopher of the court*, a French work first published in Lyon in 1547, Englished by George North and published in 1575; Giovanni Della Casa's *Il Galateo*, first published in 1558 and translated into English by Robert Peterson in 1576 with the revealing title *Galateo. Or rather, a treatise of the manners and behauiours, it behoueth a man to vse and eschewe, in his familiar conuersation*; and Stefano Guazzo's *La civil conversatione* (1574), the first three books translated from French into English in 1581 by George Pettie and the fourth from Italian by Bartholomew Young in 1586.

It could be objected that treating all these works together is to ignore their differences, to distort their arguments and thus to offer a historically misleading analysis of their intentions. It is of course true, for instance, that Philibert's *The philosopher of the court*, far from being a courtesy book, was in fact a scathing satire upon them. But as such it offered a complete if cynical account of civil courtesy. More importantly, there is some evidence that the English translation (and the English audience at large) missed the satirical nature of the treatise. In England *The philosopher of the court* was both intended and read as a serious courtesy book.⁹ Philibert readily embraced the view that the highest level of courtesy could be found in Italy, advising the reader to 'marke the Italian his Ciuilitie and courtesie'. Although the ancient Romans had spread 'certayne countenances and gestures' amongst diverse countries, the Italians had perfected courtesy. They never appear 'rashe or heady';

⁷ For the importance of Castiglione in Elizabethan England see Waddington 1993, pp. 104–6.

⁸ [Anon.], *The booke of honor and armes* (London, 1590), sig. A3^r, see also p. 39.

⁹ Javitch 1971 a. Gabriel Harvey listed it amongst the other courtesy books, see below note 18. For a more doubtful view see Anna Bryson 1998, p. 202.

‘they blush or bask at nothing’, nor ‘chaunge countenance’ but always ‘make a good apparence’. Indeed, ‘they are borne and bredde in their cuntry Courtiers’.¹⁰

Furthermore, it is true that there were several differences between Castiglione and Guazzo. Whereas Castiglione’s book had an exclusively courtly context, Guazzo emphasised civic duty and was critical of this courtly context, so much so that his art of conduct has been said to have become ‘potentially incompatible with the dissimulation, insincerity, the theatrical display, the cultural dilettantism, and the outward ornamentation that life at court seemed to require and that court critics found so objectionable even in Castiglione’.¹¹ But there seems to be little doubt, as Aldo Scaglione has noted, that ‘whilst Guazzo was trying to transcend the narrow boundaries of the court, his views of good behaviour remained conditioned by the court’.¹² The whole notion of civil conversation originated in a courtly context.¹³ Moreover, Castiglione and Guazzo were often read together, as is attested by Gabriel Harvey’s grouping them together in his list of fashionable courtesy books. Indeed he described Guazzo as a work on ‘curteous behaviour’.¹⁴ It comes as no surprise therefore that Guazzo’s account of civil conversation is strikingly similar to Castiglione and Della Casa. His treatise can be linked to the attempt to extend the courtly standards to gentlemanly society at large.¹⁵

An important continuation of this tradition is Annibale Romei’s extensive dialogue *The courtiers academie* originally published in 1585 and translated into English by the poet John Keper and published in 1598. Although it did not expound on the concept of civil courtesy or civil conversation, it had many close similarities with courtesy books in general and Castiglione in particular. *The courtiers academie* consists of seven dialogues where beauty, love, honour, combat, nobility, riches and the precedence of arms and letters are debated. Like Castiglione and Guazzo, Romei used the dialogue form of courtly discourse where

¹⁰ Philibert de Vienne, *The philosopher of the court*, transl. George North (London, 1575), pp. 110–12.

¹¹ Javitch 1971b; Javitch 1978, p. 131; Scaglione 1991, pp. 259–61, quotation from p. 260. Javitch’s argument was directed against Lievsay 1961, pp. 34–46, where Castiglione and Guazzo were juxtaposed much more strongly.

¹² Scaglione 1991, p. 261. See also Chartier 1987, p. 80, who contrasts Castiglione, Della Casa and Guazzo with Erasmus.

¹³ Fumaroli 1983, pp. 260–1.

¹⁴ Gabriel Harvey, *The letter-book of Gabriel Harvey, AD 1573–1580*, ed. E. J. L. Scott. Camden Society, 2nd ser., 23 (1884), pp. 78–9. Peter Burke has recently followed suit, Burke 1993, pp. 99–102.

¹⁵ For the connection between ‘curtesie’ and the gentleman see Stephano Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, transl. George Pettie and Barth. Young (London, 1586), fo. 90^r.

the discussion remained open-ended and inconclusive.¹⁶ Keperes related his translation to the courtesy-book tradition, noting that the work was 'grounded on the firme foundations of Aristotelian, and Platonical discipline, and yet accompanied with a liuely touch and feeling of these times'. It was therefore 'woorthie to be offered to the view and censure, of noble and courteous constructions'.¹⁷

Apart from Philibert, who commended Italian civility, all these treatises were Italian in origin. But the thoroughness with which this code of courtly conduct was perceived as an import from Italy is most graphically attested by the fact the only comprehensive English imitation of these Italian courtesy treatises was camouflaged as an Italian treatise. This was Simon Robson's (a fellow of St John's, Cambridge at the time) *The court of ciuill courtesie* first published in 1578. The invented author of Robson's short tract was 'Bengalasso del Mont. Prisacchi Retta'. The trick obviously worked efficiently for it seems to have misled Gabriel Harvey who wrote: 'And nowe of late forsoothe to helpe countenaunce owte the matter they have gotten Philbertes Philosopher of the Courte, the Italian Archebyshoppies brave Galatro [Galateo], Castiglioes fine Cortegiano, Bengalassoes Civil Instructions to his Nephewe Seignor Princisca Ganzar: Guatzoes newe Discourses of curteous behaviour, Jouios and Rassellis Emblemes in Italian . . .'.¹⁸ Robson's book obviously sold fairly well, for it was reprinted with minor variations in 1582 and 1591.

One of the overriding themes in these Renaissance courtesy treatises was to explain how the perfect courtier and gentleman should conduct his manners and behaviour so that he won a favourable response from other courtiers and gentlemen. A successful pursuit of this end demanded two kinds of behaviour. On the one hand, the courtier had to master a technique of self-representation – to offer as good a picture of himself as possible. On the other hand, he had to take his fellow courtiers and gentlemen into account and to accommodate his outward behaviour accordingly.¹⁹

¹⁶ See Bates 1991; Bates 1992; Burke 1995, p. 19.

¹⁷ Annibale Romei, *The courtiers academie*, translated J[ohn] K[epers] (n.p. [London], n.d. [1598]), sig. A2^r. For Romei see Quint 1997, pp. 245–52; Gundesheimer 1989. John Florio's two treatises called *Florio his firste fruites* (London, 1578) and *Florios second fruites* (London, 1591), containing dialogues of 'ciuill, familiar, and pleasant' topics, provided material and guidance for Italianate civil conversations.

¹⁸ Harvey, *The letter-book*, pp. 78–9. This letter is normally dated between 1575 and 1580, but the inclusion of Robson's tract narrows the first date to 1578. Robson's tract states that it was printed 'primo Ianuarij 1577', in 1578 that is to say. Both Whigham 1984, p. 26, and Javitch 1971 a, p. 113, seem to take Robson rather as a piece of 'an avant-garde continental literature' than as an English adaptation of it; see Javitch 1971 a, p. 123, and n25.

¹⁹ Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 107–11, 121–2.

To describe the courtier's behaviour, Castiglione borrowed the term 'grace' from the literary or artistic context.²⁰ First, it was crucial that the courtier did not conceal his talents, 'so that every possible thinge may be easye to him, and all men wonder at him, and he at no manne'.²¹ Second, it was equally crucial to *seem* in awe of other men's achievements: the courtier must 'with gentlenesse and courtesie praise other mens good dedes'.²² The aim was in brief 'to purchase... the general favour of great men, Gentlemen and Ladies'.²³ Primary stress was, in other words, placed upon appearances.²⁴ In order to meet these standards, it was important for a courtier to exhibit 'a gentle and lovyng behaviour in his daily conversation'.²⁵ But Castiglione also claimed that 'it is a hard matter to geve anye maner rule' how to behave in these social situations, because of 'the infinit and sundry matters that happen' in them. It was therefore safest to rely on one's instincts and 'be pliable to be conversant with' as many as possible.²⁶

Philibert's satire gives a somewhat more cynical, yet an essentially similar account of courtesy. Employing Castiglione's vocabulary, the treatise offered an analysis of 'howe to liue according to the good grace and fashion of the Court'. This consisted, by and large, 'in certaine small humanities and chiefly in outward appearances'. In order to describe it more carefully, Philibert called it, after Cicero, 'this *Decorum generale*, generall comelinesse'.²⁷ Ostensibly following the first book of Cicero's *De officiis*, Philibert claimed that the means to achieve this 'comelinesse' was to embrace the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, magnanimity and temperance. These virtues were, however, clearly subordinated to the courtier's main characteristics – decorum or 'good Grace'. Moreover, virtue itself was nothing but to act in compliance with the life of the court; indeed 'vertue is a manner of lyuing according to the manner of the Courte'.²⁸

Philibert emphasised even more strongly than Castiglione that the aim was 'the contentmente and pleasure of men'.²⁹ This becomes apparent in the discussion of 'good Grace', or 'courtly ciuilitie'. Although Philibert stressed the Ciceronian combination of honesty and *decorum*, he focused his attention exclusively on the latter concept, which was defined as 'a certayne framing and agreeing in all our actions, to the pleasing of the

²⁰ Burke 1995, p. 30.

²¹ Baldassare Castiglione, *The book of the courtier*, transl. Thomas Hoby (1561), ed. Virginia Cox (London, 1994), pp. 145, 146, 148–9, 109.

²² Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 146.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁴ Anglo 1977, pp. 41–2.

²⁵ Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 119.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 13–15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 17; Javitch 1971a, pp. 99–100.

²⁹ Philibert, *The philosopher*, p. 24.

worlde'. He asserted that 'the perfite glorie of our Philosophie' is nothing more than to 'be pleasing to all men'.³⁰ It followed that the philosopher of the court must be 'ready to doe whatsoever it be' to please all men: 'For if it be needefull to laughe, hee reioyceth: If to be sad, he lowreth: If to be angry, he pyneth: If to feede, he eateth: If to faste, he frowneth.'³¹

The gentleman and courtier's courteous behaviour mostly preoccupied Giovanni Della Casa in the *Galateo*. In his dedication to the earl of Leicester, Robert Peterson, the translator, observed that 'Courtesie and Courtiership' were inseparable; 'who so diuorceth them, destroieth them'.³² The central topic of the book, Della Casa informed his readers, was 'what manner of Countenance and grace, behoueth a man to vse, that hee may be able in Communication and familiar acquaintance with men, to shewe him selfe plesant, courteous, and gentle'. The answer he gave was to the effect that, although virtues might be necessary, they were rarely of great use. It was therefore the gentleman's 'courteous behaiour and entertaynement with good manners and wordes' that assumed the most central part in conveying his courtesy and pleasantness.³³

Simon Robson's *The covrte of ciuill courtesie* is a somewhat crude, indigenous adaptation of these themes. As the title proclaimed and as Robson explained in the subtitle, the book is concerned with the courtier's and gentleman's courtesy: 'Fitly furnished with a pleasant porte of stately phrases and pithie precepts: assembled in the behalfe of all younge Gentlemen, and others, that are desirous to frame their behaiour according to their estates, at all times, and in all companies. Therby to purchase worthy prayse of their inferiours: and estimation and credit amonge theyr betters.' Dedicating the tract 'to the flourishinge Youthes, and Courteous younge Gentlemen of England, and to all others that are desirous, and louers of Ciuile Courtesie', Richard Jones, the publisher, stated his willingness to broaden the scope of the book beyond gentlemen.³⁴ But in practise the tract was meant for gentlemen, its theme, 'ciuell Curtesie', was said to be 'most incident' to all young gentlemen. In the dedication, ostensibly by the Italian author, 'Bengalasso del Mont. Prisacchi Retta', to his nephew 'Seig. Princisca Ganzar Moretta', the book was recommended on the grounds that the nephew resided in the court: the book 'shal bee as it were a guide, to leade you from a number

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 95, 98, 108, in general pp. 108–10. ³¹ Ibid., p. 109.

³² Giovanni Della Casa, *Galateo of Maister Iohn Della Casa. Or rather, a treatise of the manners and behaiours, it behoueth a man to vse and eschewe, in his familiar conuersation*, transl. Robert Peterson (London, 1576), sig. Aii^r–v.

³³ Ibid., pp. 2, 3–4. ³⁴ S[imon] R[obson], *The covrte of ciuill courtesie* (London 1577), sig. Aii^v.

of snares which you may bee trapt withall, also for your behaiour in all companyes'.³⁵

When Castiglione mentioned 'daily conversation' he referred to social intercourse in court society in general, but speech assumed a pride of place in it. Instructions in writing were important, but it was agreed in the dialogue that the courtier 'hath more neede of' speaking, because 'he serveth his tourne oftner with speakyng then with wrytinge'.³⁶ Oral culture was thus of crucial importance in civil courtesy – in the presentation of self.³⁷

If Renaissance rhetoricians derived their accounts of their art to a large extent from Cicero, he also provided some guidance to those who delineated the rules of conversation.³⁸ Cicero had of course been aware of the crucial differences between rhetoric and conversation – or 'vehement speake' and 'comon talk', as Nicholas Grimalde rendered them in English in 1556. According to Cicero, rhetoric had been employed in 'pleadings in iudgements, orations in assemblies, and debating in the Senate-house', conversation 'in companies, in disputations, in meetings of familiers' as well as 'at feastings'. Laying down the basic rules of conversation, Cicero had emphasised that it should be 'gentle' [*levis*] and not 'obstinate' [*pertinax*]. As Grimalde translated it, 'let ther be therin a pleasantnesse'. It was important that one's 'talke bewraye not some vice in his manners'. Most importantly, the requirement of pleasure demanded that 'we muste haue regard: that those with whom we kepe talke, we seeme bothe to reuerence, and to loue'. Even 'with our vtterest enemies' we must 'keepe yet grautie, and to suppress the angry moode'.³⁹

It was this short account which the Renaissance authors followed. According to Castiglione, in order to please his interlocutors the courtier had to 'frame himselfe' and his topics according to those with whom he happened to converse.⁴⁰ He must in short never 'wante good communycatyon and fyte for them he talketh wythall, and have a good understandynge with a certein sweetenesse to refresh the hearers mindes, and

³⁵ Ibid., sigs. Aii^v, Aiii^r. ³⁶ Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 61.

³⁷ Burke 1987, pp. 80–1. Civil conversation was not confined to a gentlemanly context, see Ingram 2000, p. 93.

³⁸ Fumaroli 1983 has also argued that Ciceronian style was exceptionally fitting for the court. In contrasting civil conversation, or courtly rhetoric, as he calls it, with humanist rhetoric, represented by the Ciceronian tradition, Javitch does not pay attention to the extent to which in fact civil conversation was also conditioned by Cicero's authority; see Javitch 1978, ch. 1. Similarly, in her account of civil conversation, Bryson conflates it with rhetoric and thus overlooks their differences, Anna Bryson 1998, ch. 5.

³⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The bookes of dueties to Marcus his sonne*, transl. Nicholas Grimalde (1556) (London, 1558), fos. 58^r–60^r.

⁴⁰ Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 110, 136.

with meerie conceites and Jestes to provoke them to solace and laughter, so that without beinge at any time lothesome or satiate he may evermore delite'.⁴¹ Although conversation did not occupy as central a role in Philibert's account as it did in Castiglione's, he nevertheless pointed out that it was important 'to have some pretie sprinckled iudgement in the common places and practices of all liberall sciences' in order to avail oneself of them in conversations.⁴² Good manners and grace, beauty and attire were important, but speech and words were by far the most crucial in shaping a gentleman's courteous image. 'You must', Della Casa advised, 'accustome your selfe, to vse suche gentle and courtious speache to men, and so sweete, that it may haue no manner of bitter taste'.⁴³

In Robson's analysis speech and discussion assumed even a more central place than in his Italian models. The two longer chapters at the beginning of the tract concerned the gentleman's behaviour 'in all Companies' and 'in bad company' respectively, but the only question raised was the role of conversation in various situations. Of the nine other chapters only one concerned table manners, eight offering detailed instructions as to polite verbal response to various situations.

The fullest analysis of the centrality of conversation in civil courtesy is to be found in Guazzo's lengthy *The civile conuersation*. According to Guazzo, civil conversation was of great importance, it had a central place in gentlemanly courtesy, in conveying our politeness. It referred to both 'our tongue, and . . . our behauour'.⁴⁴ The term 'civil conversation' thus referred both to civilised social intercourse and to the usage of language as a civilised and civilising means.⁴⁵ There was nothing surprising in Guazzo's insistence that the main aim of conducting a civil conversation was to please one's interlocutors. He emphasised several times that the end was to be 'better thought of', to win 'the loue & good will' of our peers. It was useless 'to be honoured for some office . . . or for vertue' if a man purchased 'not also the friendship and good will of other, which is the right and sure bond of conuersation'.⁴⁶ It was thus only civil conversation which could bring about the desired effect. Guazzo was never tired of arguing that 'we win chieffie the friendship and good will of other, by the manner of our speech, and by the qualitie of conditions'; that a man 'shall get the goodwill and fauours of others, as well by giuing eare curteouslie, as by speaking pleasantlie'; that 'we are so much the more esteemed of,

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 149–50.

⁴² Philibert, *The philosopher*, p. 30.

⁴³ Della Casa, *Galateo*, p. 84.

⁴⁴ Guazzo, *The civile conuersation*, fo. 54^r; Ingram 2000, p. 91.

⁴⁵ Cf. Scaglione 1991, p. 258; Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 154, 55–6; Shapin 1994, pp. 114–15; Burke 1993, p. 95.

⁴⁶ Guazzo, *The civile conuersation*, fos. 54^r, 72^v.

by how much our Ciuilitie differeth from the nature and fashions of the vulgar sort; or that 'gentle and curteous speech, is the Adamant stone which draweth vnto it the hearts and good wills of all men'.⁴⁷ But the converse was no less true. 'I first admonish him', Guazzo noted, 'which taketh pleasure in ciuile Conuersation, to eschue all things which make the talke lesse delightfull to the hearers'.⁴⁸

Although Robson's tract was the only comprehensive English imitation of the Italian courtesy treatises during the latter part of the sixteenth century, these treatises very soon left their mark on numerous other English works as well. Guazzo's notion of civil conversation was quickly well established.⁴⁹ George Whetstone's *An heptameron of ciuill discourses*, set in Ravenna and published in 1582, contains dialogues on marriage, but 'intercoured with other Morall conclusions of necessarie regarde'. The preface informed the reader that the dialogue dealt with 'ciuill intertainment' governed by 'Garland' and 'Courtisie'; 'and by well regarding their speeches, thou shalt finde a discreete methode of talke, meete for a Gentleman'.⁵⁰ The discussions or 'ciuill discourses' that followed were sometimes called 'ciuill courtesie', and amongst the books recommended for 'Gouernment, and Ciuil behauiours' was 'the Courtier of Count Baldazar Castillio'.⁵¹ Thomas Twynne's *The schoolemaster, or teacher at table philosophie*, published in 1576, explained amongst other things 'the maners, behauiour and vsedge, of all sutch with whom wee may happen to bee conuersant'.⁵² Robert Ashley wrote in the 1590s that 'yt ys the part of civile courtesie and modest humanitie to speake gently to all'.⁵³ William Perkins applied these notions into a religious context in his *A direction for the government of the tongue according to Gods word* in 1593,⁵⁴ whilst Churchyard opened his essay 'A discourse of true manhoode' in his collection *Churchyards challenge*, published in 1593, by emphasising that it was 'curtesie, sweete, conuersation, freindle gentlenes, humane manners and ciuile humblnes' which should dominate 'our common societie'.⁵⁵ Thomas Wright asserted in his treatise on passions that 'the civil Gentleman' should render 'his conversation most grateful to men', and

⁴⁷ Ibid., fos. 54^r, 54^v, 56^r, 73^r. ⁴⁸ Ibid., fo. 60^v. ⁴⁹ See in general Lievsay 1961.

⁵⁰ George Whetstone, *An heptameron of ciuill discourses* (London, 1582), sig. Aiv^r. For Whetstone see Einstein 1902, p. 86; Heal 1990, p. 104.

⁵¹ Whetstone, *An heptameron*, sigs. Riv^r, Si^r.

⁵² Thomas Twynne, *The schoolemaster, or teacher at table philosophie* (London, 1576), sig. Aiv^r.

⁵³ Robert Ashley, *Of honour*, ed. Virgil B. Heltzel (San Marino, 1947), p. 69.

⁵⁴ William Perkins, *A direction for the government of the tongue according to Gods word* (Cambridge, 1593), see especially, pp. 12–13, 30–40, 40–52.

⁵⁵ Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge*, p. 59.

pointed out that ‘much more might be handled in this point, but because it rather concerneth civil conversation then investigation of passion I will omit it’.⁵⁶

By the early seventeenth century the themes of courtesy and civil conversation occupy a central place in James Cleland’s *Hero-paideia, or the institution of a young noble man* (1607), whose fifth book contained an exposition of the nobleman’s ‘Ciuill Conuersation’. It examined his behaviour in general and ‘at Court’ in particular: his reverence making and how he should speak. Although Cleland did not have exclusively a courtly audience in mind, he extolled court society, claiming that it was by far the best academy for young nobles. It was much better, he wrote, to stay in the English court than to ‘run ouer al France and Italie, in a year’.⁵⁷ In discussing ‘common behaviour towards all sorts of men’, Cleland exhorted ‘a man to accommodate himselfe and to frame his manners apt and meete for al honest companie, and societie of men’. It was highly misleading to think that noblemen were ‘not tyed to anie reciprocal courtesie’. Of course, there were many empty courtesies, which were ‘the wisdom of the world to the hurt of conscience’. These were ‘the Courtiers miseries, who are Idolaters of Ceremonie’. Despite his critical attitude, Cleland emphasised that it was necessary to follow these courtesies and ceremonies. ‘You must’, Cleland advised the young nobleman, ‘conforme your selues somewhat vnto the world, and that which is commonlie vsed’.⁵⁸

Again, however, themes of civil courtesy and conversation were not confined to any technical manual, but were much more widespread. In his numerous tracts Daniel Tuvil both employed the term ‘civil conversation’ and followed Guazzo’s lead in his actual definition as well. ‘Our carriage’, he maintained, must ‘be pleasing and acceptable to all men’.⁵⁹ ‘When wee would be professed Gentleman’, Thomas Gainsford argued in 1616, we ‘should be masters of true ciuilitie, good manners and curtesie’. Speech, he went on, had a central place in gentlemanly society, for ‘a perfect Gentleman is to bee measured in his words’.⁶⁰ In

⁵⁶ Thomas Wright, *The passions of the mind in general* (1601), ed. William Webster Newbold, *The Renaissance Imagination*, 15 (New York, 1986), pp. 92, 189.

⁵⁷ James Cleland, *Hero-paideia, or the institution of a young noble man* (Oxford, 1607), pp. 35–6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–76.

⁵⁹ D[aniel] T[uvil], *Essayes, morall and theologicall* (London, 1609), p. 38, in general pp. 35–60; D[aniel] T[uvil], *Vade mecum: a manuall of essayes, morall, theologicall* (London, 1629), pp. 37–62; see also D[aniel] T[uvil], *The dove and the serpent* (London, 1614), especially pp. 16–22. See in general Lievsay 1961.

⁶⁰ [Thomas Gainsford], *The rich cabinet furnished with varietie of excellent discriptions* (London, 1616), sig. A3^v, fo. 51^v.

1618 Nicholas Breton wrote that the court was full of 'sweete Creatures and ciuill Behauour',⁶¹ and by the early 1630s it could be asserted that the 'new Art of words, called Complements: which is indeed nothing but an affable and courteous manner of speach', had become 'so necessary, that nothing can be done without them'.⁶²

By the early seventeenth century civil courtesy and conversation were no longer perceived as predominantly Italian but more and more as French. Of course, it was possible to see the Italian gentleman as the most courteous, as in John Cooke's *Greenes to quoque* (1614), where 'the finest Gentleman' was not only 'smooth and loftie' but 'Italian' as well.⁶³ But in John Barclay's *Icon animorum* (also published in 1614) the most 'elegant and graceful' gentleman, who was therefore also inclined to fight duels, was said to be French.⁶⁴ Ralph Knevet argued in 1628 that the English imitated the French so much in dress, gesture, language and fencing that only a few could 'Know Monsieur, from an English Gentleman'.⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, some of the most important courtesy guides of the early seventeenth century were translated from French, although they carefully followed the Italian models of the sixteenth century.⁶⁶

At the outset of *A treatise of the court*, published in English in 1622, Eustache Du Refuge expounded 'ciuilitie', emphasising that it consisted of two points: 'a decency or gracefulness' and 'a pleasing *Affabilitie*'. The overall aim of civility was to conform with those with whom we socialised, and thereby to please them as well. The courtier must both 'accommodate and fit' himself to his interlocutor's 'inclination' and make himself 'agreeable and pleasing to him'. His speech and countenance must be '*Modest* and still followe that which is generally applauded of those, with whom we converse'. Although affability consisted of 'many points', all of them could be reduced to a single rule: 'by exteriour demonstration of affection' and by 'many alluring gestures and compliments' assure men 'of our *Courtesie* and good will'. Just like the sixteenth-century Italian courtesy writers, so Du Refuge considered speech as central in courtesy and its rules were therefore of special importance in

⁶¹ Nicholas Breton, *The court and country, or a brieft discourse betwene the courtier and country-man: of the manner, nature, and condition of their liues* (London, 1618), sig. A4^{r-v}. See also William Cecil, *Precepts, or, directions for the well ordering and carriage of a mans life* (London, 1637), p. 35.

⁶² [Anon.], *Cupids schoole: wherein yongmen and maids may learne diuer sorts of new, witty, and amorous complements* (London, 1632), sig. A2^v.

⁶³ John Cooke, *Greenes to quoque, or the cittie gallant* (London, 1614), sigs. I4^r, K1^{r-v}. See also e.g. Daniel Tuuil, *Christian purposes and resolutions* (London, 1622), p. 31.

⁶⁴ John Barclay, *The mirrour of mindes* [1614], transl. Thomas May (London, 1631), pp. 73, 88–90.

⁶⁵ Ralph Knevet, *Stratitikon. Or a discourse of militarie discipline* (n.p., 1628), sig. F2^r.

⁶⁶ Anna Bryson 1998, p. 122.

conversation. The courtier must never interrupt, much less contradict his interlocutor.⁶⁷

In *The honest man: or, the art to please in court*, originally published in 1630 and translated into English in 1632, Nicolas Faret also gave a prominent place to courteous behaviour in general and pleasant conversation in particular. The entire topic of his treatise was 'the most necessary qualities . . . which hee ought to haue, that desires to make himselfe pleasing in Court'. By far the most necessary of these characteristics was said to be 'to purchase a good opinion in the imagination of euery man'.⁶⁸ Similarly, Lucas Gracian Dantisco's Spanish adaptation of Della Casa's *Galateo*, originally published in the 1590s and published in English in 1640 under the title *Galateo Espagnol, or, the Spanish gallant* dwelt on the same issues. The overall aim was to be 'very acceptable, and pleasing to all'. Those who were 'mild and affable' were said to be 'good Courtiers', appearing 'every bodies friend' and 'gaining much applause by their civil carriage'.⁶⁹

The extent to which the idea of civil conversation had permeated the English intellectual landscape between the 1570s and the 1630s can be graphically attested by a comparison between Humphrey Gilbert's plans for a gentlemanly academy in the early 1570s and those of Francis Kynaston for a similar academy in the mid 1630s. Both plans insisted on such gentlemanly skills as riding, fencing and dancing. But whereas Gilbert had had the politically active life of the gentleman in view and had emphasised skills in rhetoric, politics and moral philosophy, Kynaston ignored such civic aims and overlooked the concomitant values, stressing instead the values of courtesy and 'civil conversation'.⁷⁰

Civil courtesy and conversation made up a pleasing sociability whose purpose was to gain other people's approval and respect. It meant courteous social intercourse in general, and although it addressed polite manners civilised conversation was thought to have a central place in it. Its aim was not argument but assent, to continue the even flow of social conversation.⁷¹ 'By courtesie and humanitie', William Martyn wrote in

⁶⁷ Eustache Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court or instructions for courtiers*, transl. John Reynolds (London, 1622), I, pp. 6–19, 159–66. Anglo 1983, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Nicolas Faret, *The honest man: or, the art to please in court*, transl. Edward Grimestone (London, 1632), pp. 9, 231–50, see also pp. 197–231, 251–89, 292–4.

⁶⁹ Lucas Gracian Dantisco, *Galateo Espagnol, or, the Spanish gallant*, transl. William Style (London, 1640), sig. A6^r, pp. 2–3, 39–42.

⁷⁰ Humphrey Gilbert, 'Queene Elizabethes Achademy', in *Early English Text Society*, extra series, no. 8 (1869), pp. 1–12; see also Peltonen 2002; [Francis Kynaston], *The constitutions of the Musaeum Minervae* (London, 1636), p. 1; see also Anna Bryson 1998, p. 57.

⁷¹ Shapin 1994, pp. 81, 114–19; Whigham 1984, p. 44; Heal 1990, pp. 104–6.

the *Youths instruction*, 'all societies among men are maintained and preserved . . . society is nothing else but a mutual & a reciprocal exchange of gentleness, of kindness, of affability, of familiarity, and of courtesy among men'.⁷²

The Christian tradition of courtesy had always emphasised the fact that the body was the outward reflection of the soul – 'this outward honesty of the body cometh of the soul well composed and ordered', as Erasmus had put it.⁷³ In the Renaissance notion of civil courtesy a much greater emphasis was placed on the exterior – decorum.⁷⁴ When James VI wrote to Robert Cecil in 1602 he assured him that his words 'proceed *ex abund[ant]ia cordis*, and not of any intention to pay you with Italian complementoes'.⁷⁵ In civil courtesy the content of the conversation could be negligible as long as *decorum* was maintained. Philibert excused his total concentration on good grace and outward behaviour by claiming that man's character is 'too bee knowne by the gesture and outward countenance of the bodye'. According to him, 'wee commonly iudge others by theyr outward signes'.⁷⁶ Civil conversation was by definition purely courteous and thus empty of propositional content. This point is brought out with particular adroitness by Philibert's satirical presentation of the courtesy theory. In his characterisation of the courtier, the worst mistake was precisely to forget this empty courtesy and to venture one's sincere opinion. Philibert could not, as he put it, 'forget the ignorance and brutishnesse of the people, who in feasts, banquettes, and assemblies, gouverne and order themselves, not according to the maner of the Court whiche is the best rule: but according to theyr particular pleasures and opinions'.⁷⁷

It followed, as Cleland for instance argued, that there could be a considerable discrepancy between surface and reality in conduct or speech and that dissimulation was an integral part of civil conversation.⁷⁸ Honest dissimulation was thus justified because social life took precedence over inner life.⁷⁹ This is of course central to Castiglione, who pointed out that 'it is not ill for a man that knoweth himselfe skilfull in a matter,

⁷² William Martyn, *Youths instruction* (London, 1612), p. 80. Thus the idea that civility was constitutive of social life or society was hardly an Enlightenment invention as Gordon 1994, p. 67, has claimed.

⁷³ Cited in Ingram 2000, p. 93; see also Knox 1995, pp. 19–28; Chartier 1987, p. 79.

⁷⁴ See in general Anglo 1977, p. 41; Anglo 1983. Martin 1997, pp. 1314, 1333 contains an interesting discussion of this issue.

⁷⁵ James VI and I, *Letters of King James VI & I*, ed. G. P. V. Akrigg (Berkeley, 1984), p. 199. Croft 1991, pp. 134–5.

⁷⁶ Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 104–5. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102. See in general Wootton 1999, p. 191.

⁷⁸ Curtin 1985. ⁷⁹ Revel 1989, p. 192; Villari 1987.

to seeke occasyon after a comelye sorte to shewe hys feat therein, and in lykecase to cover the partes he thynketh scante woorthye praise, yet notwithstandinge all after a certeine warye dyssimulation'.⁸⁰ Whereas for Erasmus and others courtesy was an outward sign of the soul, for Castiglione and his followers it was largely a means to repress outward indications of inner feelings.⁸¹ As Philibert put it, 'dissimulation . . . we affirm to be of so great force in our Philosophie'.⁸² And some English writers followed suit. According to George Puttenham, 'the credit . . . and profession of a very Courtier . . . is in plaine termes, cunningly to be able to dissemble'.⁸³ The courtier, Puttenham wrote, should be able to 'dissemble his conceits as well as his countenances, so as he neuer speake as he thinkes, or thinke as he speaks, and that in any matter of importance his words and his meaning very seldome meete'.⁸⁴ Du Refuge's *A treatise of the court* was even more openly advocating dissimulation and flattery. He opened his discussion by stating that in court affability often 'degenerates into flattery'. But he immediately pointed out that flattery was both profitable and necessary: 'notwithstanding it may not onely be profitable . . . but also necessary in many accedents as well towards our Prince as particular persons'.⁸⁵

But Della Casa had already accepted flattery as a necessary component in courtesy in his discussion of ceremonies. He opened his discussion by claiming that ceremonies are almost like 'lyes & dreames'. They were 'but vaine shewes of honour and reuerence, towards him to whome they be doone: framed of semblance and wordes touching their titles and courtious offers'. They were 'vaine' because, although 'we honour men to their face', we do not necessarily 'reuerence . . . in deede, but otherwise contemne'. Ceremonies, in other words, were such that the words involved had lost their actual meaning and had received a figurative one instead. These ceremonies, Della Casa asserted, 'though so fayre and gallant without' were 'altogether vaine within'; they consisted 'in semblance without effect, & in wordes without meaning'. No matter how empty the ceremonies were, it was misleading to assume that they were dispensable. First of all, they were faults of the times rather

⁸⁰ Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 148, see also pp. 146, 127.

⁸¹ Muir 1997, pp. 119–20. ⁸² Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 97–100, citation p. 97.

⁸³ George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie* (1589), ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), p. 299; see in general Javitch 1971a, pp. 103–4; Javitch 1972, p. 881. See also e.g. Robert Greene, *Mamilia. The second part of the triumph of Pallas* (London, 1593), sig. D4^r.

⁸⁴ Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, p. 299.

⁸⁵ Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, I, p. 112; II, pp. 22–5. See also Lorenzo Ducci, *Ars auilica or the courtiers arte*, transl. [Edmund Blount] (London, 1607), pp. 154–71. See also Anglo 1983, pp. 11–12.

than of particular gentlemen, and gentlemen were thus bound to follow them. Moreover, ceremonies performed an important social task. Even a ceremony for profit (a flattery done 'to the ende wee should doe them some pleasure, for it') was 'by reason of custome sufferable', although Della Casa hastened to add that it was hurtful and thus unbecoming for a gentleman.

A ceremony for duty was a different matter altogether. It might fulfil the general definition of ceremony (being utterances where the words have lost their connotative meaning), but 'we must not leaue them vndone any wise. For he that faileth to doe them, dothe not onely displease, but doth a wrong to him, to whom they be due.'⁸⁶ From a perspective that emphasised manners rather than matter, identity was to be derived from external behaviour and social indelicacy was a most serious vice.⁸⁷

Perhaps the fullest discussion of these themes is to be found in Guazzo's *Ciuile conuersation*. It is of course true that for Guazzo civil conversation could mean genuine sociability. Man was, he wrote, 'a compaignable creature' and 'loueth naturallie the conuersation of other men'.⁸⁸ In his well-known definition of civil conversation Guazzo wrote that 'ciuile Conuersation is an honest, commendable, and vertuous kinde of living in the world'.⁸⁹ In this sense civil conversation came close to a virtuous active life.⁹⁰ Sociability and the usefulness of civil conversation implied that in conversing with other people we should focus on what was said rather than how it was said. According to Guazzo, 'in money we doe not chiefly consider the fourme, and the stampe, but the weight, and the matter whereof it is made, so in speach wee ought not to looke so much to the grace and finenesse of it, as to the grauitie and goodnesse of it'.⁹¹ But it also meant that men were supposed to express their thoughts and feelings. Civil conversation, according to this interpretation, entailed a close correlation between 'the inward affection of my heart' and 'outward signes & tokens of good will'.⁹² 'He', Guazzo wrote, 'then that will behaue himselfe well in ciuile conuersation, must consider that the tongue is the mirrour & (as it were) the Image of his minde.' It followed that 'by the sound of words, we gather the inward qualities and conditions of the men'.⁹³

⁸⁶ Della Casa, *Galateo*, pp. 40–8. See also Gracian, *Galateo Espagnol*, pp. 42–3; sigs. F2^v–3^r. For Gracian see Anglo 1983, pp. 13–14.

⁸⁷ Whigham 1983, pp. 625, 627–8; Whigham 1984, p. 45.

⁸⁸ Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 4^v, 12^r, 74^v. ⁸⁹ Ibid., fos. 22^v, 74^v.

⁹⁰ Ibid., fos. 10^{r-v}, 9^v, 16^v–17^r, 17^v. See also Lievsay 1961, pp. 33–4.

⁹¹ Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 62^v. ⁹² Ibid., fos. 176^v, 77^v.

⁹³ Ibid., fos. 55^v–56^r. For a more general account of civil conversation as genuine sociability see Gordon 1994, especially pp. 67–85, 98, 113–15.

All this did not mean, however, that Guazzo failed to pay attention to the theatricality and superficiality of civil conversation. As we have seen, he emphasised again and again that the primary aim of civil conversation was to please one's interlocutors and that therefore one had to eschew everything which was 'lesse delightfull' for them. The term 'civil' referred to 'manners and conditions' rather than to one's moral character.⁹⁴ Given the fact that the end was to please other people and to gain their approval and esteem, it should be of no surprise that a gentleman was required above all to accommodate his 'manners and conditions' to other gentleman's manners. 'To be acceptable in companie', Guazzo insisted, 'we must put of as it were our owne fashions and manners, and cloath our selves with the conditions of others, and imitate them so farre as reason will permit.' Of course, in so far as 'honestie and vertue' were concerned, 'we ought to be alwayes one and the same'. But things were far otherwise with manners. As Guazzo put it, 'but touching the diversitie of the persons with whome we shall be conuersant, we must alter our selues into an other'.⁹⁵ Underlying this conviction was a more general principle that exterior was more important than interior – that 'we take more pleasure to seeme than to bee'.⁹⁶ Guazzo agreed with Castiglione that 'the dutie of a perfect Courtier . . . is to doe all things worth carefull diligence, & skilful art', but 'so that the art is hidden, and the whole seemeth to be done by chaunce, that he may thereby be had in more admiration'.⁹⁷

Guazzo also concurred with Della Casa's analysis of the importance of ceremonies. Of course, it was possible to argue that many 'professe them selues mortall enemies to those ceremonies'. But on closer inspection this was not the case and even those who 'openly detest' ceremonies, in fact, 'secretly desire them'. The reason was not far to seek. 'Ceremonies', Guazzo maintained, 'displease no bodie', because 'they are doone in signe of honour, and there is not he, who is not glad with all his heart to be honoured'. The conclusion was obvious: 'these worldly ceremonies purchase vs the good will of our friends and superiours, to whome they are addressed and make vs knowne for ciuile people'.⁹⁸

Civil conversation had thus more to do with outward manners and ceremonies than with moral virtues and duties. 'Anniball', the interlocutor who expressed Guazzo's points, told 'Guazzo', the other interlocutor, that he was not going 'to lay before you all those moral vertues which pertaine

⁹⁴ Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 21^v–22^r, 53^v–54^r.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, fo. 46^v. See also Agnew 1986, p. 77; Posner 1999, p. 17.

⁹⁶ Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fo. 75^r. ⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, fo. 8^r. ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, fos. 77^r–^v.

to the perfection & happie state of lyfe'. 'Why', 'Guazzo' retorted, 'deferre you to speake of a matter so profitable?' 'Anniball' replied that virtues were of no great significance in civil conversation because 'the most parte of men, is not onely destitute of intellectual and moral vertues, but besides, is neither in wit apt, nor in will desirous to receiue them'.⁹⁹

Such an analysis led Guazzo to take flattery and dissimulation as essential parts of civil conversation. When 'Anniball' and 'Guazzo' discussed the respective merits of solitary and social life 'Guazzo', who argued for the solitary life, noted that 'if you be affable and curteous, you shall be called a flatterer'.¹⁰⁰ Later in their discussion they ventured into a long examination of flattery. 'Guazzo' now strongly argued for the importance of flattery, exclaiming that 'though all reprove flatterie in word, yet euerie one commendeth it in heart'. He tried to convince 'Anniball' that 'hee which knoweth not how to glose and flatter, knoweth not how to behaue himselfe in companie'.¹⁰¹ 'Guazzo's' whole long defence of flattery was based on the close connection between flattery on the one hand and courtesy and civility on the other. All those who intended 'to auoide contention, and to bee acceptable in companie' used flattery by soothing 'one another, not onelie by speaking, but by holding their peace, and seeming to consent to other mennes saying'. This process was reciprocal. Those who made themselves acceptable to other gentleman were taken for friends and 'their flatterie' was seen as 'curtesie and good will'. 'Guazzo's' example was the way in which children were treated by fathers and schoolmasters who used 'greatlie to extoll' even young children's mediocre performances. The aim of civil conversation – pleasantness – thus entailed flattery; 'hee', 'Guazzo' told 'Anniball', 'which should take flatterie out of the worlde, should take awaie all humanitie and curtesie'.¹⁰²

'Anniball' seemed to have some misgivings about such an outright commendation of flattery. Very soon, however, he was compelled to accept 'a good kinde of deceit',¹⁰³ and later he advocated thorough accommodation to one's interlocutors' manners and embraced an 'olde saying, *The heart altogether vnlike, and the face altogether like to the people*'.¹⁰⁴ Anyone who could not come round to this 'shall be driuen to curse Conuersation'. 'And it is lawfull likewise', he maintained, 'sometime to make as though

⁹⁹ Ibid., fos. 21^v–22^r, 52^v.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., fo. 13^v.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., fos. 32^v, 33^v.

¹⁰² Ibid., fos. 33^v–34^v.

¹⁰³ Ibid., fos. 34^v–36^r.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., fo. 46^v.

we see not their faults, and that we haue a good opinion of them'.¹⁰⁵ But 'Anniball' had already earlier in the book advocated manifest flattery. When 'Guazzo' had enquired how he should behave himself with those who 'by their dissembling hypocrisie' were 'accounted of euerie man for honest men', 'Anniball' acknowledged that his answer could 'trouble your conscience' but, he concluded 'we ought to satisfie rather others than our selues, and to giue place to the common custome'.¹⁰⁶

HONOUR

The great emphasis placed on civil courtesy and conversation raises the obvious question about its role in genteel society. Why was it deemed so essential to demonstrate meticulously courtesies and civilities and so to conduct a civil conversation that even the least breach of them was thought to cause a serious offence? The key to this lies in Simon Robson's claim that to master civil courtesy would enable the young gentleman 'to purchase worthy prayse of their inferiours: and estimation and credit amonge theyr betters'.¹⁰⁷ Civil courtesy and conversation were, in other words, a way both to win and to confer honour and reputation. But what kind of a notion of honour were courtesy and civil conversation based on?

There can be said to be two different kinds of honour: vertical and horizontal honour.¹⁰⁸ Vertical honour can be defined as a right to special respect due to one's superiority. As this definition implies, vertical honour can be increased, and it is therefore also called positive honour. It can be contrasted with horizontal honour, which can be defined as a right to respect due to an equal. Horizontal honour thus presupposes an honour group which follows the same code of conduct and honour. An interesting thing about horizontal honour is the fact that while it could be preserved, lost or diminished, and even perhaps restored (although this was a moot point), it could never be increased. It has, therefore, been referred to as negative honour.

There is little doubt that, although the vertical notion of honour was reiterated in the Renaissance, it was above all the horizontal notion of honour or reputation which was inherent in the theory of civil courtesy and conversation. A gentleman's honour was taken to be his reputation amongst his peer group. It was his exterior or appearance, above all

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., fos. 46^v–47^r. ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., fo. 25^r. See in general Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 54–6.

¹⁰⁷ R[obson], *The courtte of ciuill courtesie*, title-page.

¹⁰⁸ See the outstanding analysis in Stewart 1994, especially pp. 54–71.

how other gentlemen regarded him. Polite behaviour was thus a means to show one's honour and respect to another gentleman.¹⁰⁹ This train of thought was already clear in William Thomas's analysis of Italian courtesy, where he strongly emphasised the close link between extreme courtesy and great reputation.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Castiglione insisted that 'gentleness and courtesie' were essential for a courtier in praising 'other mens good dedes'.¹¹¹

In Guazzo's analysis of honour and reputation, a special emphasis was placed on this idea of horizontal honour. Virtues could be important but they were useless in the pursuit of honour and reputation, if one 'purchase not also the friendship and good will of other, which is the right and sure bond of conversation'. One's reputation thus crucially hinged on other people's opinion.¹¹² Guazzo included amongst good men all those who were 'wel reported and reputed of in the worlde'. Conversely, they were bad 'who for their apparent faults are pointed at with the finger and holden for infamous'.¹¹³ 'Our name', he announced, 'dependeth of the general opinions, which haue such force, that reason is of no force against them.' But in such a case there were always those who could dissemble and thus to appear honest. As Guazzo posed the question, 'howe shall I behaue my self with some, whom I knowe farre more wicked than those whome you haue spoken of, albeit by their dissembling hypocrisie, they are accounted of euerie men for honest men?' He admitted that this was a real problem but insisted even more strongly that we have to accept that if someone through his cunning dissimulation earned a good reputation, he was then to all intents and purposes a good and honourable man.¹¹⁴

How were men expected to honour and esteem each other? The answer was simple: men honoured each other by civil courtesies. Outward ceremonies were conducted, as we have seen, 'in signe of honour'; flattery and dissimulation were potent means of showing that 'we haue a good opinion of' other men.¹¹⁵ Explaining how other people's 'good opinion' could be received, Guazzo argued that this was done 'by vsing that common meane and instrument, whereby mens hearts are wonne, that is, curtesie and affabilitie'.¹¹⁶

It was precisely the distinction between horizontal and vertical honour which also underlay Romei's account of honour in the third dialogue of *The courtiers academie*. All participants in the dialogue agreed that honour

¹⁰⁹ Whigham 1983, p. 63. ¹¹⁰ Thomas, *The historie of Italie*, fos. 3^v–4^r.

¹¹¹ Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 145–6; see also pp. 294–5.

¹¹² Guazzo, *The civile conversation*, fo. 72^v. ¹¹³ Ibid., fos. 23^{r–v}. ¹¹⁴ Ibid., fos. 24^v–25^v.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., fos. 77^{r–v}, 46^v–47^r. ¹¹⁶ Ibid., fo. 72^v.

was 'the most precious of all goods externall'. It was 'commodious' to all people but it was especially behoveful for 'a man noble and ciuill' because 'without it, being ouershadowed, as it were with the obscure darknesse of ignorance, for the most part, in steede of honour, hee imbraceth infamie'.¹¹⁷ According to Romei, there were two kinds of honour. There was 'naturall and imperfect' honour on the one hand, and 'acquired honour, and perfect' on the other. The latter one was simply 'the reward of vertue'. The former, instead of being a reward of virtuous action, was 'a common opinion, that he [who was] honored, hath neuer failed in iustice, nor valor'. It was, in brief, his reputation. This was not honour which could be won, 'because man bringeth it from his mothers wombe'. It could thus only be lost; man 'preserueth it vnspotted, except through some greuous offence or suspition, he loose[s] this good opinion'.¹¹⁸ The gentleman's genuine moral character was negligible as long as he could maintain a favourable reputation. Romei noted that all those were men of honour who – be they 'good or wicked' – 'have not lost the good opinion that the worlde conceived of them'.¹¹⁹ Such honour was called natural, because a gentleman 'is borne with that inward supposition, that he is good'.¹²⁰ It is easy to see that, whereas Romei's natural honour was an example of horizontal honour, his notion of acquired or perfect honour as the reward of virtue was an instance of vertical honour.

Robert Ashley's account of how honour was bestowed sheds further light on this intimate link between honour and courtesy. Having dealt with the objection that since men are sometimes unable to judge other people, they are unable to bestow honour rightly, Ashley emphasised that 'you geue every one that honour which is fytt for him'.¹²¹ This raised the obvious question of how honour was conferred. Ashley began his answer by admitting that it varied 'according to the custome and diuersitie of nations'. But it was generally done by showing courtesies to the person in question: 'As some in rising from their seat, others in attending, following, and accompanying, others in vncovering their heads, and others in such other things do imagine honour to consist'.¹²² Therefore, if honour consisted of the reputation of the one who was honoured, it also consisted of the reverence, esteem or courtesies shown by the one who honoured. Furthermore, Ashley believed that although the best deserved the greatest honour, 'we ought to honour and reuerence all, and to contemne no man'. He continued:

¹¹⁷ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, pp. 78–9.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 78–80, 82.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

¹²¹ Ashley, *Of honour*, p. 69.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

For yt ys the part of civile courtesie and modest humanitie to speake gently to all, to salute, embrace, and entertheyne them without difference, because nothing doth more easilie draw the good willes of men then this gracious and Courtuous kind of behaviour. Notwithstanding yt ys also the part of a prudent man to respect the desert of euerie ones vertue and also the dignitie of his person, and whatsoever els ys of moment toward th'atteyning of Honour.¹²³

To act impolitely towards someone was to dishonour him. Although honour was a reward for virtue, it was requisite to honour even those who wanted virtue, 'for courtesies sake, for shew of some owtward good, or els for fear of offence'. Revealing his close allegiance to the tradition of civil courtesy and conversation, Ashley argued that 'civilitie and courtesie . . . must be vsed towardses all, in saluting them, and speaking gently vnto them, and in all other thinges which belong to the conversacion of humane societie'. If for no other reason, discourtesy should be avoided at least for our own sake. 'The fear', as Ashley put it, 'also of offending any with our incivilitie and contempt ys more to be avoyded then to haue the evill will or hatred of any by our owne procurement.' To show discourtesy to someone was thus to arouse his anger and to lose the prospect of his subsequent esteem and reverence. According to Ashley, we had 'to labor that by our humanitie and honest indeavour we may gaine the good will and fauour of all that haue poore [i.e. power] to honour vs'.¹²⁴

In the early seventeenth century we meet essentially the same account. James Cleland advised young noblemen to 'honor those vnto whom yee doe Reuerence, and by consequence yee shal bee honoured your selues'. Honour, in the end, was not in a man's own hands, but 'in the hearts and opinion of other men'.¹²⁵ Having explained civility, affability and complements, Du Refuge pointed out that the discreet usage of these qualities 'may much auaille to purchase vs reputation and credit', whereas if they be 'omitted and neglected' this 'may iustly offend [them] who expect to receiue them from vs'. 'Honor', Du Refuge wrote, 'consists, either in the opinions we conceiue of a mans perfections & merits, or in the ceremonies of respect and reuerence, wherwith we honour him who is our superiour'.¹²⁶ In *The English gentleman* Richard Brathwait wrote that a young gentleman 'values nothing more than to get him a name', which could augment 'his renowne, and gaine him respect with his Dearest'.¹²⁷

A gentleman's honour and reputation thus consisted of another gentleman's esteem of him. They conferred honour on each other by

¹²³ Ibid., p. 69. ¹²⁴ Ibid., pp. 70–1. ¹²⁵ Cleland, *Hero-paideia*, p. 179.

¹²⁶ Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, 1, pp. 19, 145–6; see also Faret, *The honest man*, pp. 206–8.

¹²⁷ Richard Brathwait, *The English gentleman* (London, 1630), p. 35.

mutual courtesies. A gentleman's reputation was thus closely linked with civility and civil conversation, which was nothing but continual performance before one's peers.¹²⁸ But if this was so, the question arises, what happened if the meticulous rules of civility were breached. The authors of civility and civil conversation were acutely aware of this problem. They agreed that if civil behaviour was so important in shaping a perfect gentleman, even the smallest departure from the code of courtesy could be taken as supercilious behaviour and thus cause serious rupture between gentlemen.¹²⁹ Speaking was necessary for the continuation of civil conversation, but there was always the risk of causing affront. All these authors of civil courtesy agreed that nothing distanced a gentleman from the desired end more than uncouth behaviour and ungente speech.

Anna Bryson has argued that the obligation to accommodate the self to the sensibilities of others and the general awareness that a smallest digression from the code of civil courtesy would cause offence were new articulated principles in early modern courtesy manuals.¹³⁰ Della Casa carefully listed all the particular actions which might give offence to other people. He insisted that not only 'rude behauiours' but even rude 'fashions' indicated that 'they doe esteeme them but light'. But it was above all speech-acts which had this undesired tendency, and Della Casa focused his main attention on the gentleness of our speech.¹³¹

Guazzo had a somewhat more sombre view of people's general behaviour. 'We are nowe', he argued, 'growen to this point, that you cannot behaue your selfe so well, but that you shall receiue a thousand iniuries.' It was useless to think it possible to avoid this malice by withdrawing from company to a solitary life. This aggravated rather than improved the situation. 'Nay', Guazzo asserted, 'looke not for it hardlie, & assure your selfe, that for one ill word receiued in companie, you shall receiue a thousand liuing solitarilie.' All 'tale bearers, & all spies, all coiners & sowers of discord, & all those which bewraie other mens secrets' were such that they deserved their tongues to be torn away.¹³² Unlike in rhetoric, in civil conversation a gentleman had to be extremely careful and always to remember that 'he which wisheth to be well spoken of by others, must take heede he speake not ill of others'. Guazzo drew the conclusion 'that it is better to slip with the foote, then with the tongue'.¹³³

The first advice Robson offered to his readers was that a young gentleman ought to know that 'the lacke of good behauiour, which is

¹²⁸ Whigham 1983, p. 631.

¹²⁹ Anna Bryson 1998, p. 110.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 110–11; Wootton 1999, p. 201.

¹³¹ Della Casa, *Galateo*, pp. 5–7, 20, 22, 57–64.

¹³² Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 13^v, 17^r, 29^v; see also fos. 75^r–76^r.

¹³³ Ibid., fo. 55^v.

comely audacitie, with out sausive presumption' would cause 'his inferiour to be his equal, and . . . his equall his better'.¹³⁴ Furthermore, giving up one's place at table was, for the gentleman, 'an abasement not to bee suffred'.¹³⁵ As we have seen, the longest second chapter of Robson's tract explained how a gentleman ought to behave himself in bad company.

The worst of these uncivil rogues were of course those who were telling lies.¹³⁶ According to Castiglione, lying was the source of the worst mischief in a courtier. He therefore advised his reader to 'take heede he purchase not the name of a lyar, nor of a vaine person'. Moreover, the courtier should even avoid telling true but extraordinary stories: 'Therefore in his communicatyon let him be alwayes heedefull not to goe out of the lykelyhoode of truth, yea and not to speake to often those truthes that have the face of a lye, as manye doe, that never speake but of wonders, and will be of suche authoritye, that everye uncredyble matter must bee beleaved at their mouth.'¹³⁷ The courtier must never be 'yll tunded' or utter words which 'may offende, where his entent was to please'.¹³⁸ Similarly, Della Casa strongly advised against lying, and Guazzo also warned of those 'ill tongued forgers, whose naughtinesse is such, that they will accuse you to haue done or sayd that which you neuer thought'.¹³⁹ Moreover, one must abstain from 'speaking of things which are not easily beleueed'.¹⁴⁰ Again Robson agreed. His whole discussion in the second chapter was organised around different kinds of liars or 'wonder tellers' as he put it.¹⁴¹

A very similar argument is also to be found in Du Refuge's treatise. He insisted that 'he, who interrupts, or contradicts another man in his discourse', he who 'fore-tels that he would say', or he who does not 'listen to him' was giving 'offence and iniurie'. Even worse, these grave breaches of civil conversation were also 'a true testimony of contempt and disdaine'.¹⁴² Anger, Du Refuge emphasised, was stirred up by 'the small esteeme made of vs, whether it be through *Iniury*, *Disgrace*, or any other degree of *Disdaine*'. This was especially pertinent for gentlemen and courtiers, because 'all those who conceiue good opinions of themselues' did 'more easily and quickly grow *Cholericke*'.¹⁴³

¹³⁴ R[obson], *The court of civill courtesie*, p. 1.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁶ For a wide-ranging discussion of lying and truth-telling in early modern genteel society, see Shapin 1994, ch. 3.

¹³⁷ Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 149, 296.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹³⁹ Guazzo, *The civile conversation*, fo. 30^r.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, fo. 71^v.

¹⁴¹ R[obson], *The court of civill courtesie*, pp. 16–34.

¹⁴² Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, 1, p. 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 77–8.

How was a gentleman expected to react in front of these incivilities and insults? Many writers agreed not only that incivilities and insults questioned a gentleman's honour, but also that his honour was diminished or destroyed altogether unless he responded with an appropriate counterattack. The gentleman's honour was, in other words, reflexive.¹⁴⁴ The reflexive character of honour was well brought out in *The book of the courtier*, where Castiglione averred that 'even as in women honestye once stained dothe never retourne againe to the former astate: so the fame of a gentleman that carieth weapon, yf it once take a foile in any litle point through dastardlines or any other reproche, doeth evermore continue shameful in the worlde and full of ignoraunce'. But unlike women, gentlemen had to do something about defending their honour. Castiglione was seeking such a 'courage of spirite . . . in our Courtyer' that he would 'suffer not the leaste thyng in the worlde to passe that maie burthen them'.¹⁴⁵

In so far as honour was concerned, the philosophy of the court, as Philibert presented it, was stricter than ordinary laws. Even 'the least fault' when it touched the courtier's 'honour' was taken as 'the most odious and hatefulest offence that may be'. The gravest insult by far for a courtier or gentleman was the accusation of lying: 'the reprove of vanitie, and the lye, is the greatest scarre and mayme, that they maye giue to oure honour'.¹⁴⁶ The reason was not far to seek. The winning of honour, as Philibert asserted throughout the book, was the main aim of the courtier's pursuits, an end which both his embracement of virtues and his following of '*Decorum generale*' ultimately served. 'Honor and reputation', he wrote, 'is the finall conclusion of our vertue, without the whiche our vertue were of no value'.¹⁴⁷

Guazzo also concurred that honour was reflexive. It was, he pointed out, very troublesome that so many sought 'to blemish the brightnesse of other names'. This was so because reputation went before everything else – including even life. It was 'a greater offence to take awaie ones good name, which refresheth the soule, than to defraude one of foode, which sustaineth the bodie'. But if this was indeed so, it followed that a gentleman had to safeguard his reputation, irrespective of whether his reputation was based on sincerely virtuous character or on pure dissimulation and hypocrisy. As Guazzo concluded, 'we cannot abide to be il spoken of our selues, whether it be rightfullie or wrongfullie'.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Stewart 1994, pp. 64–71; Pitt-Rivers 1966, p. 22. ¹⁴⁵ Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 42–3, 38.

¹⁴⁶ Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 49–50. ¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 50, see in general pp. 20–1, 51–2.

¹⁴⁸ Guazzo, *The ciuile conuersation*, fos. 27^{r-v}.

The concept of reflexive honour emerged even more clearly in Romei's account. According to his definition, a man lost his natural honour as soon as someone impugned it. Honour was lost as soon as a man lost the good opinion of the world. Every discourtesy was a clear indication that he was not being treated as he might expect. One's reputation or status as a gentleman was, in other words, questioned. When this happened the only means of retaining the good opinion and thus one's status as a gentleman was a counterattack. As Romei's interlocutors agreed, he was 'amongest men dishonourable, who with his proper valour, makes no shew of being touched with an iniurie'.¹⁴⁹ Romei fully agreed with Castiglione that this reflexivity distinguished female from male honour, because unlike men, a woman did not lose her honour 'if with proper valor she repel not iniurie'.¹⁵⁰ If one wanted to 'be an honorable man' he must preserve 'the opinion of the world'; and the only way to do this in case of an injury was an appropriate counterattack.¹⁵¹ Exactly like Guazzo, Romei emphasised that the gentleman's utmost need to preserve his reputation was such that he must be ready to discard conventional questions of morality. The gentleman, Romei maintained, must react to every insult even if it were justified. 'An honorable man', he wrote, 'is tyed in right or wrong by his owne proper valor, to repell an iniury, and also to maintaine an vniust quarell, lest he remaine dishonored.' Of course, 'this position, at the first appearance, seemed to all the standers by, a paradox, yet was it by the greater part of the Gentlemen approued for most true'.¹⁵²

The importance of this reflexiveness was dramatically increased by the fact that once lost there was no means by which a gentleman could recover his natural honour.¹⁵³ Relying on the unquestioned authority of Cicero in claiming that private revenge is admissible, Romei added that a gentleman who patiently suffered an injury showed 'himself worthie of contempt, and consequently, vniust, and wicked; for only the wicked man is worthy to be ignominious'.¹⁵⁴ It was above all this Ciceronian argument which provided the most common way of analysing and defending reflexive honour. One author declared that honour was the most important thing in a gentleman's life, 'for loue whereof, we shun no care of minde, losse of wealth, nor aduenture of life'. When his honour had been questioned the gentleman had to react. Like Romei, the author referred to Cicero when he argued that 'euerie iniurious action not repulsed, is

¹⁴⁹ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, p. 99.¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 100–1.¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6.¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6; Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.20.

by common consent of all Martiall mindes holden a thing dishonorable, infamous, and reproachfull.¹⁵⁵ Early in the seventeenth century the soldier and author Barnaby Rich asserted that it was exceedingly difficult to reconcile the demands of justice and revenge. He confessed that 'I know not how to reconcile these matters together, but for him that is iniured I thinke the surest way is to reuenge himselfe by patience.' Yet, 'Cicero, to aggrauate the matter, tels mee, That it is as great iniustice to put vppe an iniury, as to doe a wrong.' It followed that 'all magnificent minds', as Rich argued paraphrasing Cicero, agreed that 'amongst persons of reputation, honour is preferred before life; & euery iniurious action not repulsed' was 'dishonourable, infamous and reprochfull.'¹⁵⁶

Having emphasised the importance of fame and reputation, William Martyn pointed out that 'as one mad-dog, biting another-dog, maketh him that is bitten mad too. So a slanderer in his mad folly, skandalizing another mans name and good report, maketh him angry, discontented and furious, and is the occasion of great discord, and vnquietness among men.'¹⁵⁷ Similarly, Edward Sutton wrote in 1626 that a man's 'Honour' could not 'endure the smart ierke of the tongue'. According to him, it was a commonplace that 'he that hath an ill name . . . is halfe hanged, for when a mans good name is done, himselfe is vndone'. The gentleman's reputation was extremely fragile; it was 'like glasse, if it be once cracked, it is soone broken'.¹⁵⁸ Robert Ward declared in 1639 that as long a 'Gentleman abused' has not received the satisfaction which the honour required, 'there remaines a secret tincture of disrepute'.¹⁵⁹

Early Stuart English courtesy writers also agreed that honour was reflexive. 'Neverthesse', James Cleland wrote to the young gentleman, 'I wil not infer that yee shoulde suffer your selues to be abused in action.' There was little doubt that he who was unable or unwilling 'to defend his own' honour could not 'maintaine the kings, his Countries, or another mans honour'. Irrespective of the man's 'qualitie, estate, condition or profession', he would not be honoured, if he had been as 'dul and senslesse, then a blocke'. Cleland was convinced that 'if wee should suffer our selues to be dishonoured by anie whosoeuer . . . our state were miserable'. It was 'the *Italians*' who taught the English 'this resolution,

¹⁵⁵ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sigs. A2^{r-v}.

¹⁵⁶ Barnaby Rich, *Roome for a gentleman, or the second part of faulces* (London, 1609), fos. 6^v–8^r, see also fos. 13^r, 24^{r-v}.

¹⁵⁷ Martyn, *Youths instruction*, pp. 101–2.

¹⁵⁸ Edward Sutton, *The serpent anatomized. A morall discourse* (London, 1626), pp. 18–19, 21.

¹⁵⁹ Robert Ward, *Anima'dversions of warre; or, a militarie magazine of the truest rules, and ablest instructions, for the managing of warre* (London, 1639), p. 184.

rather to die a thousand times, then to be abused and disgraced by anie'.¹⁶⁰ According to Henry Peacham, there was 'no one thing that setteth a fairer stampe vpon Nobilitie then euenesse of Carriage and care of our Reputation'.¹⁶¹ Richard Brathwait also embraced the reflexiveness of honour. His argument sometimes amounted to verbatim translations from Cicero. Fortitude demanded that the gentleman repelled injury; those who had embraced this virtue dared 'oppose themselves to all occurrents in defence of reputation; preferring death before servitude and dishonour'.¹⁶² Brathwait posed a rhetorical question – 'is there any punishment so grievous as *shame*' – and provided the answer in another rhetorical question: 'Yea, were it not better for a man who is eminent in the eye of the world, to die right out, than still live in reproach and *shame*?'¹⁶³

THE DUEL

What was the gentleman's appropriate counterattack when his honour was questioned? How was he expected to respond to insults? The only efficient means, it was widely agreed, was to issue a challenge to a duel. It was the notion of reflexive honour, the centrality of courage and the necessity to avenge insults which enabled the courtesy theorists and many other writers to defend duelling. When one gentleman had shown signs or words of discourtesy to another gentleman he had in effect insulted him and thus questioned his status as a gentleman. A challenge was thus the only possible way out of this situation for the insulted gentleman, because that would be the only way to demonstrate his courage and valour, to display his genteel character and thus to restore his tarnished reputation as a gentleman.

Given the fact that gentlemen and courtiers easily took one another's words amiss, it is no surprise that the courtesy guides discussed the duel. Even a small rupture in courtesy or civil conversation could prompt a duel. As a consequence, the person starting a proper conversation or failing to dissemble was not only breaking the rules of civil conversation;

¹⁶⁰ Cleland, *Hero-paideia*, p. 235.

¹⁶¹ Henry Peacham, *The compleat gentleman* (London, 1622), p. 185. Joshua Sylvester, *The parliament of vertuous royal* (n.p., n.d. [1614]), pp. 7, 8. See also in general William Blandy, *The castle, or picture of pollicy* (London, 1581), fo. 12^v; W[illiam] C[ovell], *Polimanteia, or, the meanes lawfull and unlawfull, to widge of the fall of a common-wealth* (Cambridge, 1595), sig. Dd1^v.

¹⁶² Brathwait, *The English gentleman*, p. 68.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 421, in general pp. 421–6. See also Richard Brathwait, *Essaies vpon the five senses, with a pithie one vpon detraction* (London, 1620), pp. 37–8.

he was also giving rise to a duel. This is well captured by Philibert, who argued that 'oute of suche a companye' where people aired their frank opinions 'manye come discontented'.¹⁶⁴

Castiglione exhorted the courtier to be skilful in arms, which would stand him in good stead in 'variaunces betwene one gentleman and an other, whereupon ensueth a combat'. The courtier was advised not to run rashly to duels because it was both dangerous and unbecoming. Recourse to the duel was, however, necessary for a courtier 'to save his estimation'. As soon as the courtier thought it would be too late to pull out of a controversy 'withoute burdeyn', he must be ready to issue a challenge and be 'utterlye resolved with hymselfe' in the actual fight as well.¹⁶⁵

In Della Casa's scheme of things it was a failure in performing ceremonies for duty which prompted insults and thus gave rise to challenges and duels. As soon as a gentleman failed to carry out his duty, duels could be provoked. According to Della Casa, 'many times it chaunceth, that men come to daggers drawing, euen for this occasion alone, that one man hath not done the other, that worship and honour vppon the way, that he ought'. It was in order to avoid these situations that we always say to everyone who 'is not a man of very base calling' 'You' rather than 'Thou', because by using the latter 'wee disgrace him and offer him outrage and wronge: and by suche speach, seeme to make no better reconing of him, then of a knaue and a clowne'.¹⁶⁶

Della Casa's account yields a picture of people who felt deeply insulted by the smallest deviation from the received customs of courtesy. His tone at this point could have been critical of this whole system of empty ceremonies. Nevertheless, he was most adamant in his insistence that under no circumstances should we contemplate the possibility of changing these customs. It follows of course that the duel should be accepted as a courteous way of settling the insults caused by deviations from gentlemanly courtesy.

Guazzo put forward a similar analysis in outlining his theory of civil conversation. He emphasised, as we have seen, the central importance of reputation and even accepted that reputation could be based on 'dissembling hypocrisie'. But he insisted no less strongly that men were prone to slander each other, and offered a detailed description of various kinds of 'euill tongued' men. Nevertheless, whilst all the affronts to God could easily be ignored, 'we cannot be quiet when either we our selues or our

¹⁶⁴ Philibert, *The philosopher*, p. 102.

¹⁶⁵ Castiglione, *The courtier*, p. 47.

¹⁶⁶ Della Casa, *Galateo*, pp. 40–8. See also Gracian, *Galateo Español*, pp. 42–3; sigs. F2^v–3^r.

friends are inured either in word or deede'.¹⁶⁷ These situations were exceptionally common in princely courts, where 'oftentimes Princes being desirous to trie out the truth, haue graunted their seruauents the combat one against the other'. There were thus public duels of honour, but there were also private duels, where the sole aim was to deliver a gentleman from an accusation of ungentlemanly behaviour and to clear his tarnished reputation. 'And I knowe', Guazzo affirmed, 'when vpon like occasion certaine Gentlemen haue conueied themselues into some close place, where because the one would not liue with the name of an euill speaker, & the other of a false accuser, they haue made an end of their liues and their quarrels both together'.¹⁶⁸

In Philibert's satire on courtesy books and especially in Robson's adaptation of them duelling occupied a central place. Philibert opened his discussion of duelling by claiming that gentlemen and courtiers were accustomed to 'blade out their brawles manfully by armes', a habit 'not only to be excused, but rather to be commended'. Although courtiers were inclined to resort to arms in various situations, it was most commonly done to 'defend their persons, or their honour'.¹⁶⁹

While courtly philosophy turned a blind eye to many other offences, insults touching our reputation required an immediate response. Because the courtier 'neuer regarde but the superficial part of any thing, and that which sheweth it selfe vnto vs', he was bound to challenge anyone who touched his exterior.¹⁷⁰ But it followed that the inward life was, if not wholly negligible, at least much less important to the courtier; it was something which did not pertain to his philosophy at all. Therefore, matters 'touching loyaltie in worde, or humanitie in deede towarde oure equalles or inferiours, it is nothing so requisite in our iustice as in the Auncientes'.¹⁷¹ Honour, reputation and duels, in other words, only appertained to questions touching exteriors, appearances and courtesies. But as well as being an efficient way of maintaining one's reputation, the duel was also a way to conceal one's faults. Challenges, Philibert asserted, were issued either by those who were inclined to 'defend their persons, or their honour', or by those who wanted to 'haue euer suche pretectes, or likely cloakes, vnder which the truth of their faultes and contentions lyeth hidden, and is couched so cunningly, that wee see them not'.¹⁷²

In Robson's account, the duel emerged in his discussion of various kinds of liars. The most harmless ones, who could easily be ignored

¹⁶⁷ Guazzo, *The civile conuersation*, fo. 24^r.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 29^{r-v}.

¹⁶⁹ Philibert, *The philosopher*, pp. 48–9.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

altogether, were those who told lies ‘only vpon pleasure to passe away the time, not lookinge to bee beleeued of any, but to be iolled within the lyke’. To those who told lies in order to ‘bee taken for dooers or knowers of great thinges’, it was best to be friendly but at the same time to make sure that other gentlemen noticed this friendliness to be grounded on pity rather than credulity. The real nuisance were those who would ‘so mingle thinges like to bee true, or at the least not impossible with thinges merely, faulse and vnpossible’ that it became impossible to distinguish the truth from falsehood. The situation was seriously exacerbated by the fact that such a liar often had a companion who pretended to be your friend and ready to ‘go into the field’ with you or for you. The best way out of this difficult situation was ‘to let the other to tell all his lies, & to let him passe with a smile in the sleeue, (as they will call it) rather then to vse either admiration, affirmation or negation’. Your reply to a possible question must be extremely courteous (‘I say no more, but it may bee true for me. For there bee many thinges that seeme vnpossible, and yet proue true’), but your face should reveal your real state of mind. The ‘woordes’, Robson insisted, ‘may bee vttered with sutche a grace, as the countenance may shew the minde, and yet the speeche keepe them from quarell’.¹⁷³

If the situation took a direction where a duel was the only possible outcome, Robson strongly advised the young gentleman courteously to thank the one who offered to be his second but firmly to refuse the same at all costs, providing a model for a polite refusal. The challenge, moreover, should be given circumspectedly rather than directly: ‘I will quarell with no body, but if any body haue any quarell to mee, I haue businesse into sutche a place, sutche a day, at sutche an hower: I wil haue but my selfe and my man, or but my selfe and my freinde, there hee may finde mee if hee dare.’¹⁷⁴

Robson emphasised that every offence and injury must be requited. Even if the offence touched only ‘profit’ it more often than not led to a duel, because even in this case the offence was requited by giving the other ‘reprochefull names for it, as the Lie, or knaue’. In such a case it was necessary not only to reply ‘with like woordes’ but also to ‘counte the wrong mine: and either offer the first blowe . . . or els challenge him into the field’. The reason for this order was not far to seek. ‘For fighting quarels’, Robson asserted, embracing a reflexive concept of honour, ‘neuer are made for profit, but for honour.’ It followed that he who

¹⁷³ R[obson], *The court of ciuill courtesie*, pp. 18–20.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., pp. 20–2.

received 'the first reprocheful words' had his honour insulted and thus became the challenger. It was, however, expedient 'for pollicie sake' (no matter how much this was a question of profit rather than honour) to try to make the other to challenge 'to saue my selfe from the daunger of the lawe'.¹⁷⁵

No matter how grave the insult had been, it was of utmost importance to act politely and 'to forbear ruffainly words'. Courtesy was the hallmark of the gentleman, and whereas an open resort to violence was deemed a serious breach of this courteous conduct, a challenge to the duel was in accordance with it. A challenge was a polite response to an impolite word or act. Its chief aim was thought to be the restoration of courtesy. Little wonder then that the gentleman should have a thorough knowledge of the whole code so that he would be 'prouided of courage, but also of woords, phrase and manner' and thus be able to act with proper grace and courtesy should an occasion arise.¹⁷⁶ Of course, the intention of some of these civilities could be to heap scorn on your opponent. Thus Robson offered careful advice to the one who had been challenged to riposte with as much insolence as he could muster. 'These words must bee vttered with sutch a gallant, plesant, & somewhat scornfull grace, that it may appere hee desireth nothyng more then that the other should meete him', instructed a marginal note.¹⁷⁷

In Romei's *The courtiers academie* the notions of horizontal and reflexive honour were expounded in detail. Romei argued, as we have seen, that a gentleman should react as soon as his reputation was questioned – as soon as he was about to lose 'the opinion of the world' – even if he knew 'himselfe to be in the wrong'. It should therefore come as no surprise that Romei wholeheartedly embraced duelling. It was horizontal honour which was at stake in a duel. It followed that those who had linked duelling with acquired honour had committed a flagrant error. Romei asserted that it was natural honour 'which giueth occasion euery day, of bralles, hatred, and rancours: and vppon which was grounded, in times past, wicked combate'.¹⁷⁸ His entire discussion of reflexive honour entailed that a challenge was the only appropriate counterattack when a gentleman's reputation was questioned.¹⁷⁹ 'A man', one of Romei's interlocutors noted, 'giueth testimony of himselfe, and his valor in blood,

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 23–4. Cf. in general F. R. Bryson 1935, p. 48. Robson gave no advice on how to achieve this. The only possibility seems to have been to reply to an insult with a blow rather than a challenge. It was not possible, Robson stated, simply to return the lie.

¹⁷⁶ R[obson], *The corte of ciuill courtesie*, pp. 27–8. ¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁷⁸ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, p. 80. ¹⁷⁹ Ibid., especially pp. 101–3.

wounds, and eminent danger of death.' This view was found by many of the interlocutors 'in points of honor most iudicial'.¹⁸⁰ Although in the ensuing dialogue 'Of Combate' much time was spent in presenting the anti-duelling case, the whole dialogue was based on the assumption that gentlemen fought both public and private duels.¹⁸¹ Indeed it was agreed that a gentleman could not refuse a challenge.¹⁸²

At the same time as the theory of duelling was discussed in these courtesy manuals, it was also examined in several treatises which made use of the more technical literature of Italian duelling manuals – above all Girolamo Muzio's *Il duello* first published in Venice in 1550. The earliest of these was *The booke of honor and armes* published anonymously in 1590.¹⁸³ Its dominant theme was 'all causes of Quarrell or Combat, the nature of Iniuries and repulses, the equalitie and disequalitie of men, who may bee challenged, and for what respects Challenges ought to bee refused'.¹⁸⁴

In the dedicatory epistle to Sir Christopher Hatton, Richard Jones, the printer, referred to Cicero's *De officiis* to argue that private revenge is admissible. Since justice prescribed that 'no violence be offered, but onlie by him that with iniurie is thereunto prouoked', it followed that 'vertue alloweth iust reuenge'.¹⁸⁵ In the preface to the reader, the account of trial by combat – 'al humaine lawes' had permitted trial by battle in the absence of other proofs – was not so much set as an example but rather

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 102–3. ¹⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 161–2. ¹⁸² Ibid., pp. 181–2.

¹⁸³ The treatise has often been ascribed to William Segar, but Kelso 1924 suggested that Richard Jones wrote it. In December 1589 Richard Jones had obtained a licence to publish a book by an Italian fencing-master Vincentio Saviolo, called *The booke of armes*. For some reason Jones decided not to proceed with the publication, but instead published anonymously *The booke of honor and armes* in 1590. There is also some circumstantial evidence that the famous translator of Italian works, Thomas Bedingfield, could have been its author. One of the members of the Society of Antiquaries mentioned in their debate about single combats a treatise called 'the Honor of arms, written by Mr. Thomas Beddingfield', see [anon.], 'Of the antiquity, use, and ceremony of lawful combats in England', in Thomas Hearne, ed., *A collection of curious treatises* (2 vols., London, 1771), II, pp. 210–11. Bedingfield translated Girolamo Cardano's *De consolatione* (originally published in 1542) in 1573 as *Cardanus comforte*; Claudio Corte's *Il cavallerizzo* (originally published in 1573) in 1584 as *The art of riding*; and Machiavelli's *The Florentine historie* in 1595. It might be of some interest to note that he was closely related to Edward Vere, the earl of Oxford, who was commonly seen as the Italianated Englishman and to Thomas Churchyard, who wrote about duelling. Bedingfield's translation of Girolamo Cardano's *De consolatione* was, as the title-page proclaimed, 'published by commaundement of the right honourable the Earle of Oxenford'. The volume also contained a letter to the reader and a prefatory poem by Churchyard, Girolamo Cardano, *Cardanus comforte*, transl. Thomas Bedingfield (London, 1573), sigs. A5^{r-v}, A6^{r-v}. Bedingfield took part in the tournaments held in May 1571, see Ward 1928, p. 59. In Edmund Bolton's *The elements of armories* (London, 1610) Thomas Bedingfield's letter to the author appeared alongside those of William Segar, William Camden and John Beaumont.

¹⁸⁴ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sig. A2^v. ¹⁸⁵ Ibid., sig. A1^{r-v}; Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.20.

as an argument to warrant the private duel. 'The cause of all Quarrell', the letter declared in its opening words, 'is Iniurie and reproach, but the matter of content, is Iustice and Honor.' Again, it was Cicero who provided legitimacy for the revenge and hence for the duel. Had Cicero not asserted that 'hee who repulseth not an iniurie, being able, offendeth no lesse, than if he had abandoned his friends, parents and countrie'?¹⁸⁶

It was thus the new private duel of honour which the author wanted to explain. He was not ignorant of the fact 'that publique Combats are in this age either rarelie or neuer granted'. It did not follow, however, that disputes regarding the gentleman's honour could be solved without recourse to arms. On the contrary, the private nature of the duel made it all the more desirable 'that all men should be fullie informed what iniurie is, and how to repulse it, when to fight, when to rest satisfied, what is Honor and good reputation, how it is gained, and by what meanes the same is kept & preserued'. It was above all these questions of the Italian doctrine of the point of honour which the author wanted to discuss in his tract.¹⁸⁷ His model, the author claimed, was no one less than 'the Earle *Balthazar Castilio*', whose book 'doth not incite men to vnadvised fight, or needles reuenge (as some simple wit may surmize) but enformeth the true meanes how to shunne all offences: or being offended, sheweth the order of reuenge and repulse, according vnto Christian knowledge and due respect of Honor'.¹⁸⁸ The author excused his discussion of 'what was ancientlie due vnto such as were victorious in publique Combats' by arguing that he was not 'ignorant that this discourse is little or nothing pertinent to priuat Combat or quarrell'.¹⁸⁹

In 1602 Robert Baker, the queen's printer, published William Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill* which relied heavily on *The booke of honor and armes*. Although its central topic was 'what order hath bene obserued in publique Combats, and princely Triumphes, both ancient and moderne',¹⁹⁰ Segar's treatise faithfully repeated some of the passages from *The booke of honor and armes*, where the author revealed his interest in the private duel. Segar even pointed out that lately 'combats haue bene more considerately granted in Italy [than in former times], for the people of that Nation (being iealous of their honour) vpon light occasions (and almost for euery lye) would resort vnto a Prince for security and licence, for combat'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁶ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sig. A2^{r-v}; Cicero, *De officiis*, 1.23.

¹⁸⁷ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sigs. A2^v-3^r. ¹⁸⁸ Ibid., sig. A3^r. ¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁹⁰ [William Segar], *Honor military, and ciuill, contained in foure bookes* (London, 1602), 'To the reader'.

¹⁹¹ [Segar], *Honor*, pp. 120, 125, 121, 117.

By far the most important of these treatises using the technical literature of Italian duelling manuals was the Italian fencing-master Vincentio Saviolo's volume entitled *Vincentio Saviolo his practise*, published in 1595 by John Wolfe, a stationer specialising in publishing Italian books. The treatise was divided into two books, the first of which was a guide to the use of the rapier and dagger. The second advised about the use 'of Honor and honorable quarrels', and amounted to an abbreviated translation of Muzio's tract.¹⁹²

The ultimate aim of Saviolo's manual was thus to teach a gentleman to vanquish his enemy in a private duel. In the preface to the reader, he wrote that 'it doth many times come to passe that discords and quarrels arise amongst souldiers and Gentlemen of honor & account, the which (when they cannot be accorded & compounded by lawe, learning, and perswasion) must bee determined, and the truth thereof tried by armes and combat'. Gentlemen, Saviolo asserted, determined 'with the point of the sword' all the questions of the 'point of honor'. This point of honour referred precisely to the gentleman's questioned honour. Anyone refusing to comply with this custom 'should bee iudged to haue greatly empayred his credit and reputation, and dishonoured him selfe in high degree'. He should also 'bee esteemed vnworthie to conuerse with Gentlemen' and unable to challenge anyone.¹⁹³ Saviolo's example in the preface was a private duel between two captains, provoked by a servant who had touched the other's sword.¹⁹⁴

Saviolo was highly interested in the social circumstances in which quarrels leading to a duel arose and his account was very similar to those of the courtesy treatises. His point of departure was that the gentleman should abstain 'from any acte whatsoever, whereby his woorthye calling may be stayned'; he should 'embrace myldenes and curtesie', inclining more 'to clemencye, then to crueltye'. But following Aristotle's account of magnanimity, Saviolo argued that the gentleman should also 'be in minde magnanimous', which implied courtesy towards his equals but awareness of his own worth as well.¹⁹⁵ What this amounted to in practice was well brought out in Saviolo's concrete examples, where the emphasis was on a gentleman's sensitivity to affront. If a 'mannerles' gentleman went into 'great feastes' and asked a gentlewoman 'discoursing' with a group of gentlemen to a dance without asking leave from the gentlemen,

¹⁹² For doubts about Saviolo's authorship see Rossi 1990; Anglo 2000, pp. 100–1.

¹⁹³ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. Y2^r–3^v. ¹⁹⁴ Ibid., sigs. B1^v–3^r.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., sigs. Pr^v–2^r. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV, 3, 1123^a34–1125^a16, especially 1124^a5–11, 1124^b26–30; *Eudemean Ethics*, III, 5, 1232^a19–1233^a30, especially 1232^a39–1232^b15.

he offended them. Similarly, staring at a gentleman in street was bound to give 'such an offence vnto some men so marked, that they cannot take it in good part, and therefore it is verie dangerous' and 'great quarrels may arise'.¹⁹⁶ If gentlemen should always remember to behave with utmost care in the company of their equals, they should no less 'to haue a great regarde of their tung, to the end they say nothing which may be euil taken or mis-constred'. In particular, they 'ought to abhorre carrying of tales, and reporting of other mens speeches', for it happened more often than not that 'the matter came from saying to doing: and what the tung had vttered the hand would maintaine'. To behave uncivilly was to hurl an insult, whose stain only a challenge and a duel could cleanse.¹⁹⁷

The theory of the point of honour, as presented by Saviolo, was essentially a code of conduct. In *Romeo and Juliet* Tybalt was not only 'a duellist' but also 'the courageous captain of compliments'.¹⁹⁸ When challenged to the field the gentleman was advised to fight his opponent as fiercely and stubbornly as he could, but the code itself was said to teach courteous behaviour. It emphasised that civil behaviour was the norm and that recourse to the duel was strictly limited to certain cases. But for these cases the theory provided a precise ritual of procedure, from the initial injury to the final outcome of violence. Saviolo commenced his second book with 'a discourse of single combats' where he presented the duel as a necessary part of gentlemanly conduct. The duel followed from 'the corruption of mans nature'. Although man could 'attaine vnto the amplitude of the aire, the hidden secrets of the earth, and the reuolutions of the heauens', he could not govern his own nature. In order to bridle the human passions, it was necessary to construct a code of conduct which 'at least . . . limit and restraine the manner of proceeding in quarrels'.¹⁹⁹ A duelling code, in other words, could decrease rather than increase the amount of violence. Increased violence, Saviolo believed, was an index of the corruption of the nobility. Rather than being 'sweet and curteous' as they should, the nobles made 'no account either of honour or dishonour' but indulged in their pleasures and appetite. Yet arms were necessary and those who had used them for 'conquering kingdomes for their Princes' had respected more 'their honour and countries good' than anything

¹⁹⁶ For the importance of eye contact in general see Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 89–90.

¹⁹⁷ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. P2^v–4^v.

¹⁹⁸ *Romeo and Juliet*, II, iv, 19–26. When Shakespeare parodied Saviolo's treatise in *As you like it*, he specifically linked it with 'books for good manners'. For Saviolo's influence on *Romeo and Juliet* see Rossi 1997.

¹⁹⁹ Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. O3^{r-v}.

else, including their own lives, and should therefore be amply rewarded. It followed, according to Saviolo, that 'it were a great shame for one of noble of-spring, not to be able to speake of armes, and to discourse of the causes of Combats, not to know how to discerne the nature and qualitie of wordes and accidents which induce men to challenges'.²⁰⁰

If the duel of honour was expounded and defended in courtesy and duelling treatises, it was also justified in fencing manuals. Giacomo di Grassi's *His true arte of defence*, translated anonymously, but edited by Thomas Churchyard and published in 1594 familiarised, as did Saviolo's treatise, the English with new Italian fencing skills and thus propagated duelling. George Hale used the dedication of *The priuate schoole of defence* (1614) to defend duelling.²⁰¹ The anonymous manual *Pallas armata. The gentlemans armorie*, published in 1639, carried a similar message.²⁰² In Joseph Swetnam's indigenous and crude fencing manual, *The schoole of the noble and worthy science of defence* (1617), duelling was also defended. Early in the tract Swetnam advised 'all men if vndiscreet words doe passe' to consider the circumstances in which they were passed and 'the worth and quality of the party which hath wronged' them. Perhaps these indiscreet words had been occasioned by a 'drink or meer foolishnesse' in which case they could be ignored. But if the insult had been a grave one, all circumstances were negligible and a challenge was a necessity.²⁰³ 'I will not say', wrote Joseph Swetnam, 'but at one time or another a mans reputation may be so neerly touched, that it cannot stand with his credit to pocket it vp, although it be made vpon a drinke.' Men were, in short, sternly exhorted to defend their reputation with their swords.²⁰⁴

Although the duelling theory was explained and discussed in courtesy books, duelling treatises as well as fencing manuals, the thoroughness with which the whole theory was quickly accepted in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England is most obvious from the fact that these explanations and discussions were never confined to any one particular form of literature.²⁰⁵ In emphasising the fact that 'honour ys cheifely incident to those that are of a great and high spirite', Robert Ashley pointed out

²⁰⁰ Ibid., sigs. O4^r–P1^v.

²⁰¹ G[eorge] H[ale], *The priuate schoole of defence. Or the defects of publique teachers, exactly discovered* (London, 1614), sigs. A3^v–6^v.

²⁰² G. A., *Pallas armata. The gentlemans armorie* (London, 1639), e.g. sig. A8^r. The manual was perhaps written by a fencing-master called Gideon Ashwell, Aylward 1956, p. 88.

²⁰³ Joseph Swetnam, *The schoole of the noble and worthy science of defence* (London, 1617), p. 4. For Swetnam see Heertum 1989.

²⁰⁴ Swetnam, *The schoole*, pp. 32, 33, 55. See also G. A., *Pallas armata*, e.g. sig. A8^r.

²⁰⁵ See also Broude 1975; Bowers 1934.

that these 'men of witt and complement are drawne with nothing more then with honour, nor feared with any thing so much as reproach'. It followed that 'yt ys much better to die with Honour then to liue with shame'. Ashley was convinced that 'one boy will fight with another to death that he may not be compted a Coward amongst his Companions'.²⁰⁶ Remigio Nannini's *Civill considerations*, published in English in 1601, simply acknowledged the ubiquity of duelling amongst gentlemen. All those who 'are of noble minde' could not 'be toucht in their honour'; in case they felt their reputation had been diminished, they would 'attend time and place for reuenge'.²⁰⁷ When Giovanni Torriano published *The Italian tutor* in 1640 one of the facing-page dialogues was 'Concerning the Duell'.²⁰⁸ The soldier and author Francis Markham 'admitted Duels' on the grounds that 'hee is euer accounted cruell to himselfe, that is carelesse of his Reputation'.²⁰⁹ Daniel Tuvil warned gentlemen that 'to pocket vp one wrong, is to allure an other'. Affronts should therefore be confronted 'with a more open Spirit'.²¹⁰ Even Thomas Hobbes seemed to accept the necessity of duelling when the rules of civil conversation were breached. Writing to Charles Cavendish to Paris in 1638, Hobbes advised him to avoid 'all offensive speech' because he who used 'harsh language' would have 'many iust occasions of Duell'.²¹¹

A common way of discussing duelling was first to present the argument against it but then to qualify this by recognising that, as a matter of fact, the duel was admissible in certain situations.²¹² George Whetstone, for example, pointed out that 'in his reuenge' the gentleman should not 'offend a ciuill company', but he also noted rather ambiguously that 'where an iniurie in words, may be reuenged in words, a Gentleman is not bound to his sword'.²¹³

Perhaps the most thorough account of the ambiguous standing of duelling was put forward by the Elizabethan writer Thomas Churchyard,

²⁰⁶ Ashley, *Of honour*, p. 50.

²⁰⁷ Remigio Nannini, *Civill considerations vpon many and sundrie histories, as well ancient as moderne, and principallie vpon those of Guicciardin*, translated from French W. T. (London, 1601), pp. 15, 235. See also John Hitchcock, *A sanctuery for honest men, or an abstract of humane wisdom* (London, 1617), pp. 25, 163–4, 169; Robert Dallington, *Aphorismes civill and militaire* (London, 1613), p. 208.

²⁰⁸ Giovanni Torriano, *A display of monosyllable particles of the Italian tongue by way of alphabet* (London, 1640), sigs. L1^r–4^r, in Giovanni Torriano, *The Italian tutor or a new and most compleat Italian grammer* (London, 1640).

²⁰⁹ Francis Markham, *The booke of honovr. Or, five decades of epistles of honovr* (London, 1625), p. 1. See also Francis Markham, *Five decades of epistles of warre* (London, 1622), pp. 22–3, 15.

²¹⁰ T[uvil], *Essayes*, p. 184; T[uvil], *Vade mecum*, p. 186.

²¹¹ Hobbes to Charles Cavendish 28 August 1638, in Thomas Hobbes, *Correspondence*, ed. Noel Malcolm (2 vols., Oxford, 1994), 1, p. 52.

²¹² For more examples see Cust 1999.

²¹³ Whetstone, *An heptameron*, sigs. Iiv^v, Pi^v.

who bemoaned the general lapse from 'sweete conuersation' into 'bitter wordes', mentioning 'the terrible brawels, that lately (on the shew of manhood) are sprong vp among vs, & nourished to long in the stoute courages of men'. He was also aggrieved by 'the ill inclination of people'; there were all too many people desirous of seeing 'bloudshed', going about 'with tales and bad deuises, to stir vp strife and contention'. He therefore expressed his fervent wish that 'mildnes might moderate the manner of our falling out'. This failing, he thought perhaps 'a regard of God, good reputation, iust cause, and honest dealing' could be used to exhort 'all men to looke to life, common society, mutuall loue, and the generall peace of a christian Kingdome', with a view to terminate 'our imbecillity'. All this did not mean that Churchyard intended to question 'any mans manhood', which could rather be demonstrated 'by the conquering of himselfe (and mastering his owne passions)' than 'by hauing the victorie of others'.²¹⁴

But neither did it mean that Churchyard wanted to abolish this new Italian habit. On the contrary, he readily admitted that a recourse to weapons was fitting 'in causes of defence'. What were these causes? First, gentlemen and soldiers who were 'of greate mindes' must 'maintaine honour, defend their countrey and credite, and to fight in no quarrell but Princes right and their owne honest causes'.²¹⁵ Defending one's private reputation was thus equated with defending one's country. More importantly, 'fame and reputation', according to Churchyard, 'is the marke that men shoote at, and the greedinesse of glorie and ambition, pricketh the mind so fast forward'. It was understandable therefore that 'loftie looks' and 'bitter wordes' kindled 'malice', bred 'contention' and set 'quarrells' abroad.²¹⁶ Just like the courtesy theorists, Churchyard argued that insulting words must be retorted by a challenge. 'The sharpe sworde', he wrote, was 'an lawfull manner of correction' in cases of 'slaunders, naughtie reports in absence, and present spitfull speeches . . . for the mayntenance of good name'. A challenge was thus the proper response to impolite deeds or words, the only response which could restore courtesy and maintain reputation. At the outset Churchyard promised 'to shew there is no greater blessednes on earth than freindly fellowship and amitie among men, and all the disturbers thereof are rather instruments of dissention, than mayntainers of good will'.²¹⁷ The duel was a means to restore this amity. Even more, the duel was the sole guarantee of civility. If nothing

²¹⁴ Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge*, pp. 68–9.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85, 59.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

else, it at least made 'a blunt blockhead beware how hee vseth his tongue'; without the duel the world would 'bee full of talkatiue merchants, and no men would care what he spoke', Churchyard maintained, echoing William Thomas's pioneering analysis.²¹⁸

The early seventeenth-century French courtesy manuals adopted this argument. Faret argued against duelling, but confessed that 'vanity' made it difficult to follow this in practice, and recommended a thorough knowledge of fencing, adding that gentlemen must be very jealous of their reputation.²¹⁹ Du Refuge had an ambivalent discussion about revenge, but also wrote that he who refused to fight a duel made 'himselfe ridiculous in the corruption of these sinfull times'.²²⁰ English early seventeenth-century courtesy books likewise seized on this argument. James Cleland's account of duelling appeared under the general title of 'Ciuil Conuersation'. He was convinced that, whilst valour was a vitally important virtue for the nobility, there were also many mistaken notions of valour running riot. According to the most dangerous one, he was 'most valiant, who hath foughte manie combates'. Gentlemen must requite 'words with words onlie'.²²¹ Nevertheless, Cleland was adamant that gentlemen must be ready to defend their names by their rapiers.²²² 'Your Obedience to God, and Allegiance to your Prince', Christopher Wandesford, a close friend and ally of the earl of Strafford, told his son in 1636, taught 'you that it is neither Safety nor Magnanimity in you, to expose your self' to quarrels which could lead to a duel. But he also insisted that 'you must be *watchfull* and *ready* by a *discreet Resolution* to *return Insolences* and *Scorns* from others'. Moreover, it was a '*Vice* to want Courage in your own Defence'.²²³

A similar ambivalence also dominated Richard Brathwait's account of duelling in *The English gentleman*. Returning to duelling several times in the course of his extensive treatise, Brathwait always emphasised its cruel and terrible nature and condemned 'our Martiall *Duellist*'.²²⁴ Again, however, he also evoked the centrality of revenge in the gentleman's life, pointing out that 'respect to our *good name*, being indeed the choicest and sweetest perfume, must not be sleighted, as to incurre apparent termes of disgrace, and not labour to wipe off that *staine*'. A gentleman must

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 59. ²¹⁹ Faret, *The honest man*, pp. 29–34, 148–9, 39–40, 146–7, 27.

²²⁰ Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, II, pp. 78–81; I, p. 148.

²²¹ Cleland, *Hero-paideia*, pp. 232–5, 221–2, 230–2.

²²² Ibid., pp. 237–9.

²²³ Christopher Wandesford, *A book of instructions* [c. 1636] (2 vols., Cambridge, 1777–8), I, pp. 32–3.

²²⁴ Brathwait, *The English gentleman*, pp. 40–8, 205–9, 420.

not 'burie such wrongs in silence, as if senselesse of the nature of an injurie'.²²⁵

This positive injunction of the necessity of duelling met with wide acceptance amongst early seventeenth-century English writers, including the poet Joshua Sylvester, and the authors Henry Peacham and Anthony Stafford. When Sylvester published *The parliament of vertues royal* at the height of the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, he included in it 'an Act against Duels, desperate Combats, and Roaringe Boyes'. But in the midst of his arguments against duelling, he made an important reservation and wrote:

Not that I blame (where Blood & Nature bindes)
In point of *Honor* (Idol of braue mindes)
A Causalier, so sensible of wrongs,
To hazard Life and all that him belongs;
Sith, void of Honour, hee is voide of sense,
That houlds not Life a deadlie Pestilence.²²⁶

Stafford fulminated against duelling for a while in the *Honour and vertue* (1640) but then made a significant Ciceronian qualification:

I desire to be read by my owne Light, for I would not have any man thinke that I inferre by this Invective against the abuse of this Heroick Vertue, that I counsell any Gentleman to endure grosse Injuries of a high nature such as may disparage his whole Race, Countrey, Religion, or hazard the safety of his person.²²⁷

A few years earlier Stafford had written that 'if any man of your own Ranke doe you an affront, shew that you are sensible of your Honour'.²²⁸ Although Walter Raleigh condemned duelling in *The history of the world*, he instructed his son not to 'lose thy reputation, or endure public disgrace; for better it were not to live, than to live a coward'. He thoroughly agreed with the theory of civil courtesy that 'all quarrels, mischief, hatred, and destruction arise from unadvised speech'.²²⁹ It was precisely this which prompted Raleigh to advise his son that 'publicke affaires are rockes, private conversacions are whirlepooles and quickesandes. It is a like perillous to doe well and to doe ill'.²³⁰

²²⁵ Ibid., pp. 208–9. ²²⁶ Sylvester, *The parliament*, pp. 7, 8.

²²⁷ Anthony Stafford, *Honour and vertue, triumphing over the grave* (London, 1640), pp. 57–60, see also 51–2, 55–6.

²²⁸ Anthony Stafford, *The guide of honovr, or the ballance wherein she may weigh her actions* (London, 1634), p. 76. See also [Gainsford], *The rich cabinet*, fo. 4^r; Peacham, *The compleat gentleman*, p. 185.

²²⁹ Walter Raleigh, 'Instructions to his son', in Walter Raleigh, *The works* (8 vols., Oxford, 1829), viii, pp. 557–70, at pp. 563, 564.

²³⁰ Cited in Whigham 1984, p. 38.

A highly interesting assessment of this moral ambiguity of duelling is to be found in John Reynolds's (the translator of Du Refuge's *A treatise of the court*) large and extremely popular collection of stories called *The triumphs of Gods revenge, against the crying, and execrable sinne of murther*, first published in 1621, but subsequently enlarged. The stories, set in Italy and France, Spain and Portugal, told of crimes and misdemeanours and the subsequent divine revenges in painstaking detail. The aim was obviously to entertain and excite the reader whilst at the same time to offer a safe moral retribution of the said crimes. The title-page of the first edition made these aims clear: 'Histories, which contained great variety of memorable accidents, amorous, morall and diuine, very necessary to restraine, and deterre vs from this bloody sinne, which, in these our dayes, makes so ample, and so lamentable a progression.' Duelling was present in several stories, and Reynolds's portrayal of it was dominated by equivocation. On the one hand, duelling was sometimes described as another form of committing atrocious murders.²³¹ Rather than endeavouring to preserve the 'vaine point of honour', gentlemen should try to save their 'soules'.²³² Reynolds wrote that 'this dishonourable poynt of honour to fight Duels, was neuer instituted by *God*, nor professed by those who really professe his *Gospel*'.²³³ Yet, at the same time duelling was presented in a much more positive light, and in those cases where duelling seemed to be condemned, the duelling code and the point of honour had clearly been breached.²³⁴ More importantly, Reynolds gave detailed descriptions of duelling codes and habits and emphasised gentlemanly honour and courtesy. Gentlemen involved in a duel were described as 'too honourable, to haue their valours tainted with . . . base points of cowardize, or trechery'. Their duels were 'performed with such valour, dexterity and resolution, that as these times infinitely admire it, so succeeding ages will verie difficultly beleeeve it'. Duels were, in short, 'reciprocall and singular demonstrations of courtesie and honour'.²³⁵

²³¹ Walmsley 1983 has seen duelling portrayed in *The triumphs of Gods revenge* in unequivocally negative terms. For examples of critical attitude see John Reynolds, *The triumphs of Gods reuenege, against the crying, and execrable sinne of murther* (London, 1621–4), I, pp. 55–7, 62; John Reynolds, *The triumphes of Gods reuenge agaynst the cryinge, & execrable sinne, of willfull, & premeditated murther. Sixe bookes* (London, 1635), IV, pp. 314–17.

²³² Reynolds, *The triumphs*, II, p. 186. ²³³ *Ibid.*, III, p. 24.

²³⁴ See *ibid.*, II, pp. 185–220 where the first duel is won by a treacherous trick and no reason could be found in the point of honour for the second duel. In bk III, pp. 1–57 the overall moral status of the characters was highly suspect.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 20–1, 24, 37–8. See also bk I, pp. 54–65, 72–3; bk II, pp. 79–80; Reynolds, *The triumphes*, IV, pp. 314–17, 375–85; VI, sig. Ooo4^v.

INSULTS AND LIES, CHALLENGES AND RAPIERS

Civil courtesy, honour and the duel were central in the Italian Renaissance theory of the gentleman but the theory in its entirety also had further elements, which were discussed in more technical literature based on Italian duelling manuals.²³⁶ To complete our account of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theory of civil courtesy and the duel we should therefore have a brief look at its more technical aspects. This enables us to gauge the full extent to which the English were ready to adopt the Italian Renaissance theory of civil courtesy and duelling.

The first of these more technical aspects was the notion of injury. It was widely agreed, as both the author of *The booke of honor and armes* and Saviolo pointed out, that 'all Injuries are either by words or by deeds'.²³⁷ But they further insisted that not all quarrels should occasion a challenge. On the contrary, only those quarrels which implied an injury were 'worthie the prooffe by weapons'.²³⁸ In the same vein Romei wrote that 'although the quarrelles may be infinite . . . yet are they reduced to two heades'; they were 'either committed in words or deeds'.²³⁹

The distinction between verbal and real insults, expounded in duelling manuals, left its marks on other contemporary English writings as well. The soldier Barnaby Rich paraphrased these manuals in 1609: 'Iniuries are aswell offered by wordes as by deedes; in wordes, by vnseemely speeches, as in giuing the lie, or such other like; in deedes no lesse by depriuing men of their reputation & right, as in deprauing them of their due by any other meane.' According to Rich, it was incumbent on gentlemen 'to know when it is time to put vp, as when it is time to draw their weapons'.²⁴⁰ John Selden agreed. Duels were fought 'vpon the Lie giuen, Fame impeached, Body wronged, or Curtesie taxed'.²⁴¹

Although the treatises on the point of honour examined various insults, the closest attention was paid to giving the lie (i.e. the accusation of lying). The centrality of the lie becomes clear in Saviolo's words: 'The summe of all therefore, is in these cases of honour, that hee unto whome the lie is

²³⁶ For a discussion of these technical aspects see F. R. Bryson 1935 and F. R. Bryson 1938.

²³⁷ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, p. 2; Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. R3^v. Also John Ferne, *The blazon of gentrie* (London, 1586), pt 1, pp. 311–12.

²³⁸ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. Z2^v–3^r. ²³⁹ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, pp. 139–40.

²⁴⁰ Rich, *Roome for a gentleman*, fo. 7^r. See also Swetnam, *The schoole*, pp. 38–9, 64–5.

²⁴¹ J[ohn] S[elden], *The duello or single combat* (London, 1610), pp. 14–17. See also John Selden, *Table talk*, ed. Frederick Pollock (London, 1927), p. 42; John Selden, *Titles of honor* (London, 1614), pp. 383–4.

wrongfullie given, ought to challenge him that offereth that dishonour, and by the swoorde to prove himsele no lyer.²⁴²

In the ideal circumstances of the duelling treatises, both forms of injuries – by words and by deeds – implied giving the lie. There was, however, a crucial difference between these two kinds of injuries. If the injury was by words, the injured party would give the lie, with the consequence that the challenge was issued by the person who flung the original insult, and thus maintained what he said. If, on the other hand, an injury was done by deed, the offended party told the offender that he had abused him, with the consequence that the lie was given as a riposte, and the one who had been abused became the challenger.²⁴³

The reason why giving the lie was thought to require a challenge as a reply was that ‘it is thought that everie man is honest, just, and honourable untill the contrarie bee proved’.²⁴⁴ Thus in case of an injury by deed it was not so much the act of violence but the ensuing accusation of dishonesty that made the challenge necessary. Giving the lie thus questioned the gentleman’s entire status as a gentleman.

Given the centrality of the lie in this process, it is hardly surprising that its nature was discussed at great length. On the one hand, it was argued that ‘everie deniall, bee it never so simple, beareth the force of a Lie’, because the effect was always the same. So, no matter whether the actual words were ‘Thou lyest, Thou sayest untruly, Thou speaketh falsely’, or ‘Thou art wide from the truth’, they always amounted to giving the lie. If, on the other hand, the words had been ‘This is not so, or the truth heereof I take to bee otherwise’, they did not imply that a lie had been given. This was so because ‘the thing may bee false; and yet hee no Lye, by reason that hee eyther maye bee evyll infourmed, or else not understande the matter as it was’.²⁴⁵ On the basis of this, various forms of lies were distinguished. There were ‘lies certaine’ and ‘conditionall lyes’, ‘lye in generall’ and ‘lye in particular’, as well as a ‘foolish lye’.²⁴⁶

²⁴² Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. R4^r.

²⁴³ Ibid., sigs. R3^v–4^r; [anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 2–3; Romei, *The courtiers academie*, p. 140.

²⁴⁴ Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. S1^r; [anon.], *The booke of honor*, p. 4.

²⁴⁵ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. S1^v–2^r.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., sigs. S2^v–X1^r; [anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 2–17. One thing which the treatises on the point of honour scarcely touched on at all was the role of seconds. Nevertheless, the English started to use seconds very quickly, but they did not pick up the French fashion of the seconds fighting one another. When Sir Henry Rich and Sir Edward Villiers went out to fight their duel in 1618 Sir Henry’s second, his brother Charles, wanted to fight Sir Edward’s second because ‘Mr. Rich was fresh come out of France, and would needs observe the French custom of fighting with the other second’. Villiers’s second, however, refused to fight; Thomas Lorkin to Sir Thomas Puckering 5 January 1619, in *The court and times of James I*, ed. Thomas Birch (2 vols, London, 1849), II, pp. 120–1.

According to the theory of the point of honour, it was incumbent on the person who had been given the lie to challenge the other to a duel. The challenge ought to be a written letter, stating briefly the point at issue. Saviolo noted that these challenges or 'Cartels' were often published so that the challenged party could not claim ignorance of the challenge.²⁴⁷ The proper procedure was deemed important because the defendant had the choice of weapons. *The booke of honor and armes* and Saviolo carefully explained this choice emphasising the need to choose both offensive and defensive weapons.²⁴⁸ Moreover, these treatises offered meticulous accounts of staging a public duel and perused the various forms of weapons used in combats, the time, participants and detailed rules of these public fights, including those of winning and losing.²⁴⁹ Thomas Churchyard summarised this entire discussion exceptionally well when he declared that gentlemen and soldiers 'haue set downe by certaine cerimonies, what wordes may touch them, what manner of men they may deale withall, what occasions may force a combate, what scope & liberty pertaines to a iust quarrell, and what restraines a manly minde from doing iniury to others or harming himselfe'.²⁵⁰

Closely related to these themes was the striking technological change in handweapons which coincided with duelling: the heavy sword was more and more replaced by the light rapier. The rapier was much more dangerous and lethal than the cumbersome sword, and, whereas the sword required the maximum muscular strength, the adroit handling of the rapier demanded special skills and technical dexterity.²⁵¹

The rapier and the concomitant art of fencing began to gain wider ground in England during the latter part of the sixteenth century, through the teaching of Italian masters, who found students in court circles. By the early 1580s 'the inferious sorte' of people were castigated for carrying so similar weapons than 'any noble, honorable, or worshipfull Man doth, or may weare' that 'the one cannot easily be discerned from the other'.²⁵² Rocco Bonetti came to England in 1569 and set up the

²⁴⁷ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. X1^v–3^v.

²⁴⁸ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 24–7; Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. Bb1^r–3^v.

²⁴⁹ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. Bb1^r–Ee2^r; [anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 24–49; Ferne, *The blazon of gentrie*, 1, pp. 313–39; Segar, *Honor military*, pp. 109–31; Romei, *The courtiers academie*, pp. 163–82.

²⁵⁰ Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge*, p. 62.

²⁵¹ Aylward 1956, pp. 2–3; Anglo 1990a, pp. 2–4. Anglo 1988 emphasises the skills needed in the usage of the traditional sword. See in general Anglo 1994; Aylward 1953; Aylward 1960; Bruhn Hoffmeyer 1979; Aylward 1956; Castle 1969; Sieveking 1916; Hutton 1901; Turner and Soper 1990. But see now Anglo 2000, especially pp. 99–112.

²⁵² Philip Stubbes, *The anatomie of abuses* (London, 1583), sigs. ¶17^v, Eviii^r.

first Italian fencing school in London in 1576. Among his patrons were Sir John North and Sir Walter Raleigh. In his proposal for a new academy in London, which would offer a more practical education for the youth of the aristocracy and gentry than the universities, Humphrey Gilbert included a 'Master of defence' whose duty would have been to teach 'the Rapier and dagger, the Sworde and tergat, the gripe of the dagger, the battaile axe and the pike'.²⁵³ Nothing came of this plan but another fashionable school was opened by the 1590s by Vincentio Saviolo himself together with his brother Jeronimo, whose patron was the earl of Essex. The close link between the rapier and the duel is obvious. François de La Noue was convinced that 'the exercise of fencing' had directly led to duels.²⁵⁴ This link is graphically attested by the fact that when Lord Bruce of Kinloss and Edward Sackville were heading towards their celebrated duel in 1613, Lord Bruce went to France to learn to fence.²⁵⁵

When Thomas Churchyard published his edition of Giacomo di Grassi's fencing manual he emphasised the beneficial consequences of the new Italian art, claiming that di Grassi's book would 'saue many mens lyues' and 'put comon quarrels out of vre'. In skilful hands the rapier was exceedingly dangerous, and men did not feel inclined to fight. According to the English preface of the book, the rapier was 'most perillous, therefore most feared, and thereupon priuate quarrels and common frayes [are] soonest shunned'.²⁵⁶ Far from arguing that the rapier would be useful in war, the tract regarded it as a gentlemanly weapon particularly suitable for questions of honour. The rapier was, in short, 'a weapon more vsuall for Gentlemens wearing'. Moreover, the whole art of fencing 'tendeth to no other vse but the defence of mans life and reputation'.²⁵⁷

Saviolo took it for granted that the gentleman carried his rapier at all times. According to him, 'amongst Knightes, Captaines and valiant Souldiours, the Rapier is it which sheweth who are men of armes and of honour, and which obtaineth right for those which are wronged'. The rapier was the weapon 'which ordinarily Noble men, Knightes, Gentlemen and Souldiours weare by their side, as being more proper and fit to be worne then other weapons'.²⁵⁸ Saviolo claimed that fencing

²⁵³ Gilbert, 'Queene Elizabethes Achademy', pp. 1–12, on p. 7. For Bonetti and Gilbert see Anglo 2000, pp. 17, 27.

²⁵⁴ La Noue, *The politicke*, p. 159.

²⁵⁵ Ralph Winwood, *Memorials of affairs of state in the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James I* (3 vols., London, 1725), III, p. 454.

²⁵⁶ Giacomo di Grassi, *His true arte of defence*, transl. I. G. (London, 1594), sigs. ¶2^v, ¶¶1^v.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. ¶¶1^r. ²⁵⁸ Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. D2^r.

was of 'very great and necessarie vse . . . in generall warres', but freely admitted that it was of much greater use 'in particular combats, & many other accidents'. It followed that 'eury man of honour' and 'a louer of gentlemanlike qualities' should seek to learn and practise these skills.²⁵⁹

The indigenous English fencing manuals closely followed the example of their Italian predecessors. They taught above all the use of the rapier and therefore took it for granted that the context was single combats and duelling. In teaching their art, they all stressed the utmost importance of the technical skills. George Hale pointed out that there were men who maintained that 'skill auayleth little or nothing in fight'. His whole treatise was designed to disprove this claim. Hale argued that the art of defence was nothing less than a science, which meant that it was verging on certainty.²⁶⁰ Joseph Swetnam alleged that one no less than Prince Henry had perused his book in draft and had 'earnestly perswaded me to print it'. The prince had been famous for his fencing skills, and Swetnam used this as a springboard to bolster both the art of fencing in general and the importance of technical skills in it in particular. According to him, 'skill in weapons is so honorable and so precious a thing, that in my mind it may be preferred next vnto diuinity'.²⁶¹ The importance of fencing skills was easy to prove. Swetnam wrote, 'he that is well instructed in the perfect skill with his weapon although but small of stature, and weake of strength, may with a little moouing of his foote or a suddaine turning of his hand, or with the quicke agility of his body kill and bring to the ground the tall and strongest man that is'.²⁶² If Hale saw fencing as a science and Swetnam next to divinity in importance, for the author of *Pallas armata* it was 'next to the liberall' arts. Little wonder then that he agreed with his predecessors that successful fencing needed above all technical skills.²⁶³

Fencing skills might be useful for a gentleman because they were fashionable. But they were vital to his honour and life. The ultimate aim of these manuals was, as Swetnam's discussion made clear, the efficient killing of the opponent in a duel.²⁶⁴ Di Grassi emphasised that a thrust was better than a cut because it was quicker and hence did 'more hurt'.²⁶⁵ Luke, the pupil in Saviolo's dialogue, was very much aware of 'the danger' belonging to fencing, perceiving 'how . . . a man in one

²⁵⁹ Ibid., sigs. C1^r–3^r, D1^r. ²⁶⁰ H[ale], *The priuate schoole*, sigs. A8^r–^v, B2^v–5^v.

²⁶¹ Swetnam, *The schoole*, sigs. B4^v, C1^r. ¹⁶² Ibid., pp. 4–5, see also pp. 55, 57, 62–3.

²⁶³ G. A., *Pallas armata*, sigs. *7^v–A1^v. ²⁶⁴ See Anglo 1990a, p. 11; Anglo 2000, pp. 30–9.

²⁶⁵ di Grassi, *His true art*, sig. D2^v.

moment may be slaine'. Vincent, the master, wholeheartedly agreed that 'in the verie least point consisteth life and death'. The matters he was teaching 'are for fight and combat, not for play or practise'; the aim was 'so to hurt your enemye, as your selfe may escape free'; and if the gentleman 'cannot hit or hurt their enemy' they should 'learn to defend them selues that they be not hurt'.²⁶⁶ It was essential to understand that although 'foiles . . . cannot doo much hurt', even 'a small pricke of a Rapiers pointe maie either kill, or at the least maim'. And even a small wound would give you the advantage: 'how little so euer your enemy is wounded in the face, he is halfe vndone and vanquished, whether by chaunce it fall out that the blood couer and hinder his sight, or that the wound be mortall, as most in that parte are'. It was a great pity, Vincent thought, that there were so few who understood this.²⁶⁷

In the first book Luke recounted to Vincent how he had been the day before 'in an honorable place, wher upon occasion of some ielousie of loue of certaine gentlewomen two gentlemen of the companie fell at words, and from words to deeds', giving 'their faithes the next morning to trie it with their weapons'. In due course they had met, and 'brauely perfourmed their combate: in the execution whereof', as Saviolo had Luke say, 'I tooke great pleasure to be a beholder'. Luke's pleasure was not so much occasioned by the 'delight to see them kill one another' but rather by the opportunity to see a fight between a right-handed and a left-handed man.²⁶⁸

All this appears in its most gruesome form in Saviolo's account of the possible duel with a friend. 'If a man', asked Luke, 'were to goe into the feelde with some freend of his', how should he act so that 'he would not kill his freend, but would willingly saue and keepe him from harme?' In his answer, Vincent sternly rebuked Luke's entire approach. 'Firste', he replied, 'I would wish euery one which is challenged into the feeld, to consider that he which challengeth him, dooth not require to fight with him as a freend, but as an enemye, and that he is not to thinke any otherwise of his minde but as full of rancour and malice towards him.' No matter 'how great a freend', your opponent was, at the moment of a duel, your mortal enemy, and should not be trusted on any account. You could try to make amends, but, as Vincent carefully explained, 'if they be matters that touch your honour', it followed that 'you bee compelled to accept of the combat', and you must try to 'doo the best you can when you haue your weapon in your hand'.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. B₁^v, K₂^r, G₂^r, *₄^r, D₄^r.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, sigs. L₃^{v-4}^r, G₁^{v-2}^r.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, sigs. M₂^{v-3}^r.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, sigs. E₂^{r-4}^r.

THE STANDING OF THE DUEL

From William Thomas onwards duelling was said to play a vital role in civil courtesy. 'The scare' of the duel, as Thomas had already argued, prompted men to behave and converse with high sense of civility. But if this civility was breached, the duel was the sole means of restoring it. This account raises, however, the obvious question of the duel's overall role in the theory of civil courtesy.

Many scholars have argued that the new theory of civil courtesy went hand in hand with the building of an absolutist state. Underlying such accounts is Norbert Elias's theory of the civilising process and the duel's role in it. According to Elias, the development of the modern state together with absolutism changed 'an upper class of relatively independent warriors or knights' to 'a more or less pacified upper class of courtiers', by imposing an ever-increasing self-constraint upon them, and thus by civilising their manners. This self-constraint and pacification reached its peak, Elias argued, when by the late seventeenth century Louis XIV was in a position to prohibit duelling.²⁷⁰ In Elias's analysis, refined courtesy was an important means for the members of the court society to distinguish themselves from the rest of the society. Moreover, when self-restraint reached this level, duels, according to Elias, were transformed from rapier fights into fights of words, which required their own special skills of 'courtly rationality'.²⁷¹

Such an analysis, which links civility and royal authority closely together, has of course been especially marked in the early modern French context. Orest Ranum has written that in seventeenth-century France courtesy books 'enhanced the royal power to establish the codes civility and assure respect for the social hierarchy'.²⁷² But a similar account has also gained wide currency in England. Daniel Javitch has argued that Renaissance civil courtesy played its role in the consolidation of royal power. Its chief task in this process was to tame the aristocracy and to bring it in line with royal authority. From the aristocracy's point of view, the theory of civil courtesy enabled them to please the king in the court and thus curry favour with him.²⁷³ Blair Worden has recently followed suit and tells us that 'the evolution of Renaissance courtesy belongs to the same process as the erosion of limited monarchy'.²⁷⁴

²⁷⁰ Elias 1982, Elias 1983, Elias 1978. The quotations are from Elias 1982, p. 8.

²⁷¹ Elias 1982, pp. 271, 281; Elias 1983, p. 240.

²⁷² Ranum 1980, p. 428. See also Schalk 1991; Brockliss 1999. For critical remarks see Adamson 1999a, pp. 9, 15.

²⁷³ Javitch 1978, p. 117; Javitch 1983, pp. 27-8.

²⁷⁴ Worden 1996, p. 243, in general pp. 243-5.

There is little doubt that many of the treatises on civil courtesy took the strongly hierarchical nature of genteel society for granted. Numerous courtesy manuals assumed that the courtier's or gentleman's behaviour was different whether he was in the company of his superiors, equals or those below him in the hierarchy. On top of these situations, the presence of the prince called for a behaviour of its own. In Castiglione a significant part of the discussion of polite speaking was devoted to pleasing the prince.²⁷⁵ George Puttenham exhorted 'a Courtly Gentleman' to be sometimes 'a creeper, and curry fauell with his superiours'.²⁷⁶ James Cleland was not only interested in obeying the strict order of hierarchy in every occasion as a way of honouring those above you. He was equally concerned with proper behaviour in the princely court: in the presence of the sovereign one must 'bow down vnto the ground in token of subiection and humilitie', and do 'this submission without murmuring'.²⁷⁷ Having discussed how the gentleman should be mild and affable, 'full of sobrietic, and appliable demeanour in his conuersation', Daniel Tuvil went on to examine his behaviour towards his superiors. He must be like 'the childe of *Obedience*, and the friend of *Seruitude*'. The gentleman was also advised to put up with any insults coming from superiors.²⁷⁸ 'It is', Tuvil wrote, 'the part of a wise man to make a vertue of Necessity, and with a settled countenance to swallow down vpon an vrgent extremity, the bitter potion of indignity'.²⁷⁹ If an injury had been hurled by a superior, rather than challenging him the gentleman should thank the superior for it.²⁸⁰

This sense of hierarchy seems to have been extraordinarily acute in originally French treatises. Eustache Du Refuge maintained that, irrespective of 'the ends and intents' why men 'throw themselues on the *Court*', they all shared the common aim of purchasing 'the fauour of their *Prince*'. A courtier's success in this hinged crucially on 'the pleasingnesse and agreeablenesse of his behaiour, actions, and cariage'. This required, amongst other things, that the courtier must be ready 'to flatter' the prince. At the same time Du Refuge advocated the strenuous acceptance of '*Court-Patience*' which consisted both of the avoidance of injuries and of 'supporting and desembling other mens iniuries'.²⁸¹ The same idea is even more strikingly argued by Nicholas Faret. He opened the chapter 'Of a courtiers life' by insisting that 'seruitude is so necessary, as it

²⁷⁵ Castiglione, *The courtier*, pp. 120–1. ²⁷⁶ Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie*, p. 293.

²⁷⁷ Cleland, *Hero-paideia*, pp. 180–4, 173.

²⁷⁸ D[aniel] T[uvil], *The dove and the serpent* (London, 1614), pp. 16, 23–9, 33–4.

²⁷⁹ T[uvil], *Essayes*, pp. 175, 177. ²⁸⁰ T[uvil], *Vade mecum*, pp. 183–4.

²⁸¹ Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, II, pp. 1–25, I, pp. 179–80.

seemes that the liberty which a man reserues to himselfe, is an usurpation which he makes vpon the Soueraignes authority'. The courtier's most 'worthy object' was 'to serue his Prince well'.²⁸² Although Faret advised the courtier to avoid flattery, he also emphasised that all his actions must 'tend to please' the prince; under no circumstances should he contradict the prince.²⁸³

Furthermore, there is little doubt that duelling played an important role in taming upper-class violence. The whole code of the private duel, as we briefly saw in the Introduction, had been constructed in sixteenth-century Italian court culture to replace vendetta and thus seriously to decrease the level of violence. Similarly, the intricate duelling code was one central factor underlying Lawrence Stone's account of the process in which unenlightened factitious territorial warlords of the fifteenth century were transformed into the cultivated capitalist oligarchy of the eighteenth.²⁸⁴ The idea that duelling would decrease the level of violence loomed large in the treatises advocating the duelling code. From William Thomas onwards it was argued that duelling and a high level of civility went hand in hand. According to Saviolo, it was necessary to construct a code of conduct which 'at least . . . limit and restraîne the manner of proceeding in quarrels'. The remedy was to be found in a strict adherence to the theory of the point of honour, which would teach gentlemen the situations where it was incumbent for them to issue a challenge.²⁸⁵ And many others followed suit. George Hale wrote that the Italians were 'the first inuenters of Foyle-weapon, and the cunningst Practisers' of it, and yet 'there single Combats are rather reported then scene', whereas 'in ruder Countries as Poland' fights were much more common.²⁸⁶ There was, Joseph Swetnam maintained, a world of a difference between a man who killed another man 'cowardly, in a desperate humour' and a man who did the same 'in a morning vpon a iust quarrell in the field, and both being equally matched'.²⁸⁷ According to the *Pallas armata*, learning to use the rapier with aplomb meant that 'thou dost scarcely give any occasion of falling out'.²⁸⁸ The traveller Fynes Moryson offered a thorough analysis of the changing faces of upper-class violence in many European countries and the impact the duelling code had made on it.²⁸⁹

²⁸² Faret, *The honest man*, pp. 109–45, quotations, pp. 110, 121–2.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–96.

²⁸⁴ Stone 1965, pp. 223–50; Stone 1987, pp. 295–310.

²⁸⁵ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. O3^r–P1^v.

²⁸⁶ H[ale], *The priuate schoole*, sig. A5^r.

²⁸⁷ Swetnam, *The schoole*, sig. C3^v, pp. 3, 4–5, 12–13, 18 (quotation), 29–31, and more generally 20–8.

²⁸⁸ G. A., *Pallas armata*, fos. *7^v–8^r.

²⁸⁹ Moryson, *An itinerary*, part III, p. 28.

Despite such statements, however, the centrality of the duel in the theory of civil courtesy calls the argument of the neat and uncomplicated relationship between civil courtesy and absolutism into question. To see civility merely as a means of accommodating oneself to a strict hierarchy and of consolidating the hierarchical structure of gentlemanly society and thereby strengthening royal authority is an obvious oversimplification. The social context for the emerging theory of civil courtesy and thus for that of duelling was no longer the rural aristocracy, as had been the case of medieval courtesy literature, but rather a more urban and therefore diverse upper class. Whereas the medieval courtesy literature had thus been closely linked with modes of lordship, the Renaissance and early modern civil courtesy or civility was closely attached to modes of urbanity. Its central feature therefore was the largely anonymous and hence equal court and gentlemanly society and the fierce competition within it, which this anonymity and equality perpetuated.²⁹⁰ In 1675 it was pointed out that whereas a gentleman 'was Valued in the Country by those that knew where his *Paternal Mannors* lay, and how much he would have *per annum*, yet in the City where they judge all things by appearance, he was like to find no more Respect than what his outside procured him'.²⁹¹ Recent studies on early modern aristocratic society in England and elsewhere in Europe have emphasised their unstable nature. It was above all a highly competitive society. Rather than being 'an organic whole, organized around a stable hierarchy', the nobles viewed their society as 'a collection of intensely competing individuals'.²⁹² The world of civil courtesy not merely demanded accommodation to others but was also 'the milieu of competition for prestige and reputation, where the gentleman had constantly to maintain, protect, and enhance his status in defensive or assertive social display'.²⁹³ As well as curbing aristocratic tensions, the court milieu could often exacerbate them as well.²⁹⁴

Of course, many courtesy manuals pointed out that one's behaviour should be different towards one's superiors, equals and inferiors. Yet, by and large, the entire theory of civil courtesy was built on the assumption

²⁹⁰ Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 60–3, 112–18. As Bryson has argued, this urbanity did not mean a bourgeois or middle-class standard of behaviour at odds with previously established aristocratic ideals. In fact, this social milieu of the court and the city was so defined that merchants and tradesmen were excluded from it. Some attempts were made to base a code of behaviour, designed for merchants and tradesmen, on a similar basis, e.g. Thomas Crewe, *The nosegay of morall philosophie, lately dispersed amongst many Italian authours* (London, 1580), sig. B5^r.

²⁹¹ [Anon.], *The town adventurer. A discourse of masquerades, playes, &c.* (London, 1675), p. 21.

²⁹² Dewald 1993, pp. 43, 25–7; Neuschel 1989, pp. 69–102; Adamson 1999b, p. 105.

²⁹³ Anna Bryson 1998, p. 241.

²⁹⁴ Hibbard 1996, p. 162. See also Hammer 1995; Smuts 1996, pp. 88–9.

of relative equality amongst courtiers and gentlemen. The dialogue form in several treatises conveyed the idea of equality. According to the devotional author John Norden, with a superior the gentleman must be 'neither too awfull nor familiar', with his equall he should be both 'courteous and familiar' and with an inferior 'though courteous yet not too familiar'.²⁹⁵ Giovanni Torriano wrote in his dialogue 'concerning the living of a courtiers life' that they used 'courtesy and flattery' to 'one another'.²⁹⁶ Courtiers were expected to combine, the Catholic John Barclay pointed out, pleasing the prince and an eminence 'for extreame boldnesse'.²⁹⁷ Nicholas Faret, who emphasised the essential need to please the prince, also thought that the courtier must be familiar with 'the conversation of equals' and composed a long chapter on it.²⁹⁸ And even Leonardo Ducci in his highly cynical *Ars avlica*, where a main theme was how to successfully curry favour with the prince, examined the courtier's relationship with other courtiers and emphasised the centrality of 'ciuilitie' in it.²⁹⁹

More importantly, acknowledging that court and gentlemanly society contained a partially hierarchical structure was not seen as incompatible with duelling. John Selden pointed out that although there was a wide gap between a duke and a gentleman the latter could still challenge the former. By injuring the gentleman, the duke made himself his 'equall', and duels concerned above all the disputes between equals.³⁰⁰ In this sense the duelling theory could in fact help to promote the equal nature of the gentlemanly world. As many historians of duelling have pointed out, a central purpose of 'the duelling ritual was to reaffirm the equality of the principals after it had been disrupted by an insult'.³⁰¹

Even those who were keen on maintaining a hierarchy within the gentlemanly world still argued that duelling could be conflated with this hierarchy. According to Simon Robson, the code regulating gentlemanly conduct pertained to all gentlemen as a group, but everyone should be keenly aware of his own position in it. That is to say, a gentleman should behave differently towards his inferiors, equals and superiors, and the response to an insult depended on the dignity of the one who

²⁹⁵ John Norden, *The fathers legacie. With precepts morall, and prayers diuine* (London, 1625), sig. A4^v.

²⁹⁶ Torriano, *A display of monosyllable particles*, sigs. I1^r–2^r.

²⁹⁷ Barclay, *The mirrore*, pp. 141–2.

²⁹⁸ Faret, *The honest man*, pp. 197–231.

²⁹⁹ Ducci, *Ars avlica*, pp. 251–78.

³⁰⁰ Selden, *Table talk*, p. 42. Cf. Swetnam, *The schoole*, pp. 65–6, who strongly exhorted the reader not to fight against 'great men which are about thy calling'. See also [anon.], *The araignment, examination, confession and iudgement of Arnold Crosbye* (London, 1591) sig. Bi^r–v.

³⁰¹ Greenberg 1996, pp. 58, 62–4, 74–5; Frevert 1995, pp. 26, 156; Neuschel 1989, pp. 206–7.

had flung the same. 'But if any man', Robson wrote, 'bee called by any reprochefull names, they must needes bee requitted both in termes and deedes but after sundrie manners accordynge to the person, the cause and the place.'³⁰²

In case 'a mans better, beyng a noble person' (but not 'of the counsell') simply reproved the gentleman for a fault, it was advisable to proceed with the 'mediation of freindes, and humble woordes'. The gentleman could for instance reply to the noble: 'My Lorde, these bee verie ill termes to offer to a Gentleman: and I must tel, you offer them to him that would not beare them at manie mens handes, but I must beare them at yours.' The gentleman should also explain that 'I confesse you bee able to ouermatche mee: your traine is longer then mine.'³⁰³ Robson reminded his readers that as words 'breake no boanes (so from one mutche a mans better) they bee no greate disgraces', meaning no doubt that the gentleman should contain himself in the face of these words. In fact, he would be accounted for 'the wiser to forbear, where hee knoweth hee shall by power and rowtes of men or kindred, bee ouer matched'.³⁰⁴ Whether the noble could have been ready to swallow such replies from his inferior was a different matter altogether.

There was, however, a very strict limit to the gentleman's patience. If the noble inflicted a serious injury by 'scornefull woords', 'the inferiour ought by all meanes . . . to escuse the matter' and 'yeelde with request of pardon', although, as Robson carefully noted, 'not abaceing himself too much'. But if the noble person was unwilling to accept the excuse or 'the inferiour had iust cause to commit the offence, & that therevpon the noble man breake out in termes of reproche, as knaue, or lie', the gentleman should reply by issuing a warning. He could inform the noble that 'these termes bee odious, and sutche as . . . I would not beare if you were my equall, neither peradventure would you offer them, but I pray you leaue them, for I cannot promise you still to temper my selfe so, but that I may forget you be a noble man.' He could also simply return the insult pointing out that 'I neither am knaue, nor lie any more then you, take it as you list.' More importantly, the gentleman could also remind the noble of the fact that he [i.e. the gentleman] had to struggle for his place as well: 'I know you are a noble man, you may peradventure ouermatche mee with your trayne, and yet I must scramble [i.e. struggle] as well as I can too.' Finally, he could point out that he was not one of his retainers and that their footing was therefore more equal and the

³⁰² R[obson], *The court of ciuill courtesie*, pp. 21–2.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

danger of a duel more imminent. 'Your L[ord] may bestow these lueries on those that liue by you, and cannot liue without you: if you will not haue mee forget you, forget not your self, for I am mutche afeard I shall respect the villanie you offer mee about the dignities of your estate.' It is difficult to see how these replies could not have escalated into violence.³⁰⁵ Nevertheless, there was one case where it was incumbent even on the gentleman to issue a challenge to his superior. If the noble gave him a blow, 'a man shalbe ashamed, if he do not his best to reache him another, whatsoeuer come of it'.³⁰⁶

Although hierarchical distinctions were clearly important in Robson's account of civil courtesy, they attenuated markedly in competitive situations. For Robson, competitiveness and rivalry, whilst not obliterating hierarchy altogether, nevertheless played down its importance, emphasising the dimension of equality in gentlemanly society. Besmirching words uttered or unbecoming deeds performed touched every gentleman's honour and thus put them on a par with one another. Moreover, Robson's ensuing discussion brought it well out that escaping a challenge in any situation where insults were hurled between a gentleman and a nobleman was in practice inconceivable.

When 'an inferiour offer his better ill speeche', although the superior had started the confrontation, the superior must immediately feel extremely insulted, discard all formalities touching the proper order and 'reward that reply with a rap on the face with a dagger'. If the inferior was not even a gentleman, the insulted was left with even a wider range of possible lines of action 'without any imputation of cowardise'. He could challenge him or let the inferior to do this. He could even 'turne one of his men' to do the job, providing the inferior was not 'well esteemed for his valiancie', because in that case the noble could have been thought to act out of 'feare'.³⁰⁷

But Robson was not only keenly aware of the implications of the hierarchical structure of the noble milieu; he was equally attentive to circumstances caused by the royal court and the presence of the monarch. Again, however, neither the court nor the monarch herself should prompt gentlemen to abandon duelling. They should rather simply take the court or the monarch's presence in their stride. Robson thought, in other

³⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 22–3. ³⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 23–4.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 24–5. This discussion of the case where the insult was flung by the inferior was withdrawn both from the 1582 and 1591 editions. For some concrete examples of situations like these see Sir Kenelm Digby's conduct described in William Blundell, *A cavalier's note book*, ed. T. Ellison Gibson (London, 1880), pp. 151–3; [anon.], *Sr. Kenelme Digbyes honour maintained* (London, 1641), sigs. A2^v–4^r.

words, that special care should be exercised if the quarrel occurred in 'the Queenes house (beyng the court)'. In the court a gentleman must refrain from giving someone a blow, because 'if they do they lose their hande'. Similar instructions were in place 'in the house of mutch a mans better', 'in the house of his freende', 'in a mans owne house, or his Fathers' house. In all these places, instead of a blow, a gentleman should simply issue a challenge: 'No moo woordes, this matter shalbee eased anon you shall see.' Robson gave a list of extremely abusive replies from which the gentleman could choose the beginning of his challenge. One possibility was to reply: 'Away rascall with thy villanous woordes, I heare by thy great boaste I shall passe my iourney quietly at sutche an hower, in sutche a place . . . no more a doo, you know my minde'.³⁰⁸ Gentlemen should carefully avoid the ire of the prince, but must go on with their challenges and duels. According to Robson, far from instructing the most efficient means of pleasing the prince, civil courtesy was first and foremost about how to act in the competitive society of courtiers and gentlemen. Although the presence of the monarch imposed certain rules on gentlemen, she was for the most part beyond the world of civil courtesy.

Thomas Churchyard offered a strikingly similar analysis of the hierarchy of the gentlemanly world, the royal court's special place in it and the duel's role amidst these hierarchies. Churchyard began his analysis by emphasising the severe restrictions which the hierarchy imposed on duelling. A gentleman should always abstain from playing 'the ruffian and roister' and under no circumstances should he 'stoupe so lowe' as to challenge someone ungente, let alone to take up a challenge coming from such 'a rude and rusticall fellowe'.³⁰⁹ Furthermore, 'a simple Souldier (or mercenary man) may not challenge a Captaine', and should in general keep himself from brawling. The officer, moreover, could 'without reproche refuse in euery place' a challenge from an ordinary soldier. In such a case, Churchyard stressed, 'there is no kinde of preiudice to any partie, but mallice may surcease, and society may reuiue friendship and quietness'.³¹⁰

Nevertheless, in his subsequent analysis Churchyard like Robson before him made such reservations that they more or less negated these restrictions. A simple soldier could not challenge his superior 'except a lie hath passed, a slander is receiued, a blow bee giuen, a mans name and credite be foiled'. A simple soldier, in other words, could challenge

³⁰⁸ R[obson], *The court of ciuill courtesie*, pp. 25–7.

³⁰⁹ Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge*, p. 61. ³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 62–3.

an officer in all those cases where his honour and reputation had been questioned. When an offence was intended 'to disgrace any person', 'surely no nature can so easely digest those extremities, but shall finde occasion of dislike, and a great motion of quarrell'. So much for the peaceful solution, which the hierarchy allegedly imposed.³¹¹

For Churchyard, it was above all gentlemanly reputation at large which was at stake in a duel; and he was willing to extend this reputation even to common soldiers. The whole duelling code served therefore to emphasise the basic equality of this gentlemanly culture. As Churchyard argued in a highly revealing passage, quarrels and brawls between 'noble great mindes, whose valiauncy can neither suffer iniury, nor abide any blemishe of honour' could only be suppressed 'where some party is ouer great'.³¹²

Just like Robson, Churchyard maintained that the royal court was an exceptional case. In a princely 'Court we ought to haue greatest regard, where not only the Prince hold residens with a continuall maiestie, but likewise by absolute power commaunds obedience, & restraynes Courtiars many wayes from offering of iniuries'. Men who attended 'the Chamber of presence or any place neere (or about a Princes pallace)' could not hurl insults to each other at will. Or, if serious insults were hurled, they had to keep silent or 'ciuilly with reuerence to vse comly wordes, meete for such a place'. The court, Churchyard wrote, was 'no place of contention, nor no soile for brawles and braggers'; rather it was 'a place of royall dignity' and 'princely entertainements'. And because of this it was also, Churchyard deemed, a place of 'curteous behaiours, and fine and friendly fashions, that with orderly manner may set foorth a Princes regality'.³¹³

Of course, there were some who lacked temperance and therefore 'rashly behaue himselfe and with warme wordes sturre the coales of a wicked quarrell'. In case this happened, the courtier should not 'looke what is offered in open hearing or secret whispering' but simply to tread them 'vnder foote' or pass them over 'with sporting', so that these 'rash speeches' did not 'grow out of order, both past remedy, and beyond the boundes of good manner'.³¹⁴ Churchyard's whole discussion was predicated on the crucial importance which 'comly wordes', 'curteous behaiours, and fine and friendly fashions' had in a successful life at court. It was only when the courtier was able to 'quench the heat' of his fury and anger that he was a real courtier.³¹⁵ The idea that the court was a

³¹¹ Ibid., pp. 62–3.

³¹² Ibid., p. 66.

³¹³ Ibid., p. 64.

³¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 64–5.

³¹⁵ Ibid., p. 65.

nurturing place of courtesy seemed to have been an abiding theme in his writings.³¹⁶

Nevertheless, Churchyard could also be highly critical of the hierarchical structure of court society. A constant theme running through his numerous publications was a severe criticism of court. This started off in his broadsides published in 1566, where he emphasised in a somewhat trite manner that there was no friendship in court, because it was a place full of flattery.³¹⁷ In his subsequent writings he pointed out that whereas in 'the Countreie' a man had 'free skope to walke', the court was a place of 'toile', 'where hart much thinks, and tongue dare litle talke'.³¹⁸ He further castigated courtly dissimulation, flattery and grace,³¹⁹ finding 'artificiall courtesie' nothing but 'double dessembled countenance' which misled 'plaine people'.³²⁰ Just three years after his discussion of duelling and civility he returned to these themes and rhymed:

The court is but a pleasant cage
For birds to prune their feathers in,
A ioy to youth, a paine to age,
Where many lose, and few do win:
A step of state, where honor stands
To bring free harts in bondage bands.³²¹

Churchyard thus clearly recognised the tension inherent in the theory of duelling between the aristocracy and a strong monarchy, between the ideal of aristocratic honour and the authority of the monarch. On the one hand, he insisted that the courtiers should behave politely and restrain themselves from fighting; on the other hand, he not only accepted

³¹⁶ See Thomas Churchyard, *A discourse of the queenes maiesties entertainment in Suffolk and Norfolk* (London, n.d. [1578]), sigs. Bi^r–ij^r, where Churchyard commended the 'outward apparence, and manifest curtesies' of the common people who came to see the queen in her progress; 'the meanest persons that followed the Court, stood meruellously contented with that they saw, and wondered at the rare & good maner of the people'. This state of affairs disproved the claim that 'all ciuillitie were vtterly decayed'. But, Churchyard added, 'it seemeth strange, that people nurtured farre from Courte shoulde vse muche courtesie'.

³¹⁷ Thomas Churchyard, *A farewell cauld Churchyardes rounde* (London, n.d. [1566]); Thomas Churchyard, *Churchyardes lamentacion of freyndshyp* (London, n.d. [1566]); Thomas Churchyard, *A greater thanks, for Churchyardes welcome home* (London, n.d. [1566]); Thomas Churchyard, *Churchyardes farewell* (London, n.d. [1566]).

³¹⁸ Thomas Churchyard, *The firste parte of Churchyardes chippes, containyng twelue seuerall labours* (London, 1575), fo. 17^r.

³¹⁹ Thomas Churchyard, *A pleasante laborinthe called Churchyardes chance* (London, 1580), fos. 10^v, 19^v–21^r; see also Thomas Churchyard, *A light bondell of liuely discourses called Churchyardes charge* (London, 1580), sigs. Biiij^r–Civ^r.

³²⁰ Thomas Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall of warres* (London, n.d. [1579]), sig.*iiij^r. Cf. in general, Thomas Churchyard, *A muscicall consort of heauenly harmonie . . . called Churchyardes charitie* (London, 1595), pp. 1–23.

³²¹ Thomas Churchyard, *A pleasant discourse of court and wars* (London, 1596), sig. A3^v.

duelling but related it precisely to the notion of civil courtesy. The presence of the queen foisted severe limitations on the gentleman's freedom to maintain his reputation with his rapier, but it could not stop it taking place altogether. In Churchyard's analysis, the duel, far from being an example of incivility, secured civility by enforcing 'a blunt blockhead beware how hee vseth his tongue'.

Churchyard's rather ambiguous account suggests that the role of duelling in civil courtesy played down the prince's authority. Underlying the intense concern with the proper behaviour within both the strict hierarchy and the relatively equal gentlemanly society were two factors. One the one hand, civil courtesy strengthened gentlemanly solidarity. One important factor in shaping the theory of civil courtesy was the exclusion of all but a privileged few from the spheres of genteel society. Civility with its meticulous rules was thus reproducing an exclusive world in court and city.³²² At the same time, however, this world of civil courtesy was highly competitive; there was a fierce competition for prestige and reputation which the civility guides openly acknowledged. This intense rivalry dominated the life of courtiers and gentlemen and left the prince on the margins. As one writer noted in the middle of the seventeenth century, the extreme outward politeness was merely covering the intense rivalry between courtiers.³²³ Civil courtesy and the theory of duelling, by reinforcing the gentlemanly homogeneity and governing the intense rivalry between gentlemen and courtiers, left the prince on the periphery of civil courtesy.

Neither did the theorists of duelling fail to comment on this conflict between the requirements of civil courtesy on the one hand and the monarch's authority on the other. They not only acknowledged that their theory contradicted the existing laws and royal commands; they even suggested ways in which gentlemen could dodge legal sanctions and royal displeasure. Robson gave careful advice how to avoid being accused of challenging someone. When a gentleman had been given the lie he could of course challenge the other. But 'for pollicie sake' the gentleman could also retort by giving him a blow, which would then force the other who originally gave the lie to issue the challenge. The advantage of this 'pollicie' was, as Robson meticulously noted, 'I can . . . driue him to challenge me to saue my selfe from the daunger of the lawe'.³²⁴

³²² See Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 241–2, to whose analysis I am much indebted.

³²³ T[homas] C[ulpeper] Jr., *Morall discourses and essayes upon severall select subjects* (London, 1655), pp. 2–3. See also Stafford, *The guide of honovr*, pp. 92–4.

³²⁴ R[obson], *The covrte of ciuill courtesie*, p. 24.

Robson also warned, as we have seen, that a gentleman should proceed with utmost care in 'the Queenes house (beyng the court)'. There, as Robson carefully advised in a marginal note, 'al chalenges of poyntinge places must bee made in the care for danger of law'.³²⁵ Another good way of evading the accusation of a direct challenge was to tell the enemy that 'you may easily finde me at your pleasure howbeit I protest I would be lothe to haue to doo with any man: marie, if I bee interrupted of my walke, I must doo as well as I can to keepe my footyng'.³²⁶ When Sir George Wharton and Sir James Stuart were about to fight their fatal duel in 1609 Sir James acted in accordance with Robson's advice. Despite the fact that the insults had been hurled in public, Sir James wanted to carry out the fight in private. Thus instead of sending a friend to carry his reply to the challenge, he sent his servant, to avoid the 'great hazard of discouery'.³²⁷

The same dilemma was underlying Churchyard's account of duelling. On the one hand, the monarch tried to stop gentlemen from duelling, but the gentlemanly code of conduct demanded them to reply to an insult by a challenge and to defy the monarch's command and thus obviously to risk rather than preserve her favour. Many an author agreed. One of Romei's interlocutors pointed out that although the prince would not grant the field, gentlemen had to be ready to fight a duel: 'necessity maketh many things lawfull which are vnlawfull'.³²⁸ The author of *The booke of honor and armes* firmly believed that although a gentleman did not obtain leave, he should 'without license go vnto the place of Combat, and with Armes answeere the Enemie; for the obligation of honor is to bee preferred before all other'.³²⁹ It was exactly this private nature of duelling which made it so important to 'be fullie informed what iniurie is, and how to repulse it, when to fight, when to rest satisfied, what is Honor and good reputation, how [it] is gained and by what meanes the same is kept preserued'.³³⁰ Segar not only repeated that honour obliged gentlemen to prefer it to everything else; he also argued that it was 'reasonable, that a martiall man iustly challenged, should (without offence) appeare in the field, and with sword in hand defend his honour'.³³¹ Even Du Refuge admitted that the courtier and gentleman must 'follow *Costume*, although

³²⁵ Ibid., pp. 25–6. ³²⁶ Ibid., p. 27. ³²⁷ BL, Stowe MS 143, fos. 105–6.

³²⁸ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, pp. 161–2.

³²⁹ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, p. 36. Segar repeated this passage, Segar, *Honor military*, p. 121. See also G. A., *Pallas armata*, sig. A6^v.

³³⁰ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sigs. A2^v–3^r, pp. 13–14.

³³¹ Segar, *Honor military*, pp. 116–17. This is reminiscent of Andrea Alciato, *De singulari certamine* (1529), in Andrea Alciato, *Opera omnia* (4 vols., Frankfurt, 1617), iv, cols. 532–4.

it be many times directly opposite to *Lawes* and *Ordinances*'. His example was nothing else than the demands of 'the point of *Honour*'; if a courtier refused to fight 'a *Duell*' by appealing 'to the expresse letter and sence of the *Law*, or the rule of *Conscience*, he makes himselfe ridiculous'.³³²

Perhaps the fullest discussion of the gentleman's dilemma between the prince's commands and the demands of civil courtesy and duelling is to be found in Saviolo's treatise. In the first book Saviolo pointed out that in fighting a duel a gentleman had always to worry about 'the punishment which the lawes will inflict and laie vppon' him 'whether it bee losse of goods, imprisonment, or death'.³³³ The same theme also emerges in the second book, in a chapter entitled 'whether the subiecte ought to obey his Soueraigne, being by him forbidden to Combat'. According to Saviolo, it had become a commonplace that although 'Gentlemen are resolved, that for their Prince and Soueraigne they will gladly hazard their liues euen into greatest daungers', yet 'their honour will they not in anie case suffer to be spotted with disgrace or cowardise'. As a consequence, personal honour was dearer to a gentleman than both his life and prince. In order to avoid interference by the prince, gentlemen had recently started to 'retire into some secrete place' to fight their duels, 'laying a side all respect either of their Princes fauour or losse of goods, or banishment from their Countrie'. Anyone refusing to comply with this custom 'should bee iudged to haue greatly empayred his credit and reputation, and dishonoured him selfe in high degree'. He should also 'bee esteemed vnworthie to conuerse with Gentlemen' and unable to challenge anyone. The same rule also applied to the soldier, who 'being burdened with some especiall quarrell concerning his reputation, ought so much to regarde the same, that he ought to abandon both the armye, his countrie and naturall Prince, rather then to suffer it to passe vnanswered'. If the soldier was in a besieged city, 'hee ought to leape ouer the walles, to goe and defend his honour'. Saviolo was clearly aware that many had written against the private duel but thought he did not need to trouble himself 'with aunswering all such friuolous obiections'.³³⁴

It was exactly to instruct his readers how to proceed with their private duels and to avoid the glaring contradiction between the gentlemanly point of honour and the commands of laws and the prince that Saviolo added at the last minute a chapter 'Of Duello or Combat' to the second book.³³⁵ He opened the chapter by pointing out that the public duel

³³² Du Refuge, *A treatise of the court*, 1, pp. 148–9.

³³³ Saviolo, *His practise*, sigs. E2^r–4^r. ³³⁴ *Ibid.*, Y2^r–3^v.

³³⁵ It appears between signatures Gg4 and Hh1, and has its own signatures, ¶1 and ¶2.

'is now long since out of custome, and not permitted by lawes'. But Saviolo aimed to disclose to his readers how they could get away with their private duels anyway. 'My intention', he wrote, 'is to giue gentlemen warning how they appoint the field with their enemies, seeing it is not permitted by the lawes to bee done publicly.'³³⁶

If the theory of duelling complicated the relationship between civil courtesy and the royal authority, it also undermined the equally central position of Christianity. The theory of duelling, in other words, openly questioned the primacy of Christian concepts in the gentleman's life.³³⁷ Of course, the entire tradition of civil courtesy could easily challenge Christian views.³³⁸ As Martin Ingram has recently pointed out the 'duty of complaisance was likely, in the long run, to blunt the edge of moral condemnation, and indeed might create an alternative morality that radically parted company with traditional Christian teaching'.³³⁹ The extent to which the authors of civil courtesy and duelling were prepared to argue that some elements of their ideology were incompatible with the doctrines of Christianity is striking. In Romei's analysis of honour and honesty he acknowledged that for a Christian view his analysis was simply not 'convenient'. Indeed, for 'a Christian, who neuer ought to enter into an action, which offendeth God', there was no doubt that 'an honorable man ought not to maintaine an vniust quarell'.³⁴⁰

Although many aspects of the courtier's life could be seen as antithetical to Christianity,³⁴¹ it was the theory of duelling and point of honour which was often said to directly clash with religious doctrines. Lord Sanquhar was convinced that because he had been 'trained up in the courts of princes and in arms' he had to stand 'more on points of honour than religion'.³⁴² When the author of *The booke of honor and armes* pointed out that honour was the most important thing in the gentleman's life and that he must therefore be ready to sacrifice his life for it, he also added that Christianity put forward a different scheme of values. 'The Christian Lawe', he wrote, required 'so perfect patience, as not onlie to indure iniurious words, but also quietlie to suffer euerie force and violence.' Nevertheless, he was ready to counter the Christian law and justify a private duel of honour partly by the authority of Cicero

³³⁶ Saviolo, *His practise*, sig. ¶1^r–2^v. ³³⁷ See Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 235–6.

³³⁸ Dewald 1993, pp. 132–3; see also Gordon 1994, pp. 79–85; Cohen 1999, p. 54; Carter 2001, pp. 42–3.

³³⁹ Ingram 2000, p. 94. ³⁴⁰ Romei, *The courtiers academie*, p. 100, see also p. 130.

³⁴¹ See e.g. Cleland, *Hero-paideia*, pp. 189–90.

³⁴² *A complete collection of state trials*, ed. T. B. Howell (21 vols., London, 1816), II, col. 754.

and partly by arguing that following 'the Christian lawe' would make a gentleman 'dishonorable, infamous, and reproachfull'.³⁴³

A very similar account is to be found in Barnaby Rich's *Roome for a gentleman*. Having discussed both the verbal and real insults, Rich added that 'vertue alloweth a iust Reuenge'. But he immediately went on to state the Christian case: 'Yet true it is that the law of God willeth vs to be of that perfect patience, as not onely to endure iniurious wordes, but also queitly to disgest [*sic*] and put vp all other wrongs, that are offered.' Having stated the Christian case, Rich hastily brushed it aside: 'let Diuinity and Philosophy too, perswade what they list', but the gentleman had to find 'no man capable of glory, that is not apt and ready to reuenge'.³⁴⁴ An important part of Richard Brathwait's ambivalence about duelling was caused by Christian considerations. The gentleman who 'ponders the qualitie of his disgrace', Brathwait wrote, 'never considers what the diuine Law injoynes'. 'A Christian' should focus more on 'an higher object' than on 'worldly esteeme, or popular grace'.³⁴⁵ Joseph Swetnam included some pious remarks in his discussion of the rapier and the duel, and John Selden maintained that, despite the teaching of 'the diuine law and Christianity', duelling was permissible.³⁴⁶ When Anthony Stafford exhorted the gentleman to be 'sensible of your Honour', he added in a marginal note that 'this is not so consonant to the Doctrine of Christ, as I would it were'.³⁴⁷

³⁴³ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, sig. A2^{r-v}.

³⁴⁴ Rich, *Roome for a gentleman*, fo. 7^r.

³⁴⁵ Brathwait, *The English gentleman*, pp. 208-9, 421-2.

³⁴⁶ Swetnam, *The schoole*, pp. 14-15; Selden, *The dvello*, pp. 16-17.

³⁴⁷ Stafford, *The guide of honovr*, pp. 76-7. See also Anthony Stafford, *Meditations, and resolutions, moral, diuine, politicall* (London, 1612), pp. 13-15.

The Jacobean anti-duelling campaign

‘TO PREVENT THESE PERNICIOUS DUELLS’

‘I do not remember’, wrote one of the critics of duelling, ‘that any capital crime, but this of duels, is frequently and publicly defended by persons otherwise discreet and sober.’ He had known, he went on, ‘a youth in the fourteenth year of his age’ who had been exceptionally reticent ‘until I chanced to speak of the point of honour and duels’. When this topic had been broached, the youth had suddenly become exceptionally loquacious, rehearsing ‘the discourse which he [had] heard from his father’ who had been an expert ‘in the mistaken points of honour’.¹

If the theory of duelling became quickly established in England in the latter part of the sixteenth century, the concomitant social habit quickly followed suit. But we can now see that when the Elizabethan and Jacobean courtiers, nobles and gentlemen gave each other the lie, issued challenges and fought duels, they were not so much returning to their native chivalric past but rather consciously imitating fashionable foreign habits. When the notorious duellist Lord Herbert of Cherbury discussed in his autobiography ‘the discreet civility which is to be observed in communication either with friends or strangers’, he recommended ‘*Guazzo de la Civile Conversation* and *Galeteus de Moribus*’.²

The earl of Essex’s penchant for single combats could well have been an index of his willingness to imitate the Italian Renaissance ideals rather than a sign of his indebtedness to the medieval honour culture.³ Similarly, perhaps the most famous challenge in Elizabethan England – the one

¹ Blundell, *A cavalier’s note book*, pp. 219–29.

² *The autobiography of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, ed. Will H. Dircks (London, 1888), p. 52.

³ See Adams 1995, p. 44, who emphasises the classical influence on Essex. For Essex’s proneness to duelling see *Calendar of state papers domestic* (hereafter *CSPD*), 1581–90, p. 566; Robert Naunton, *Fragmenta regalia: or, observations on the late Queen Elizabeth her times, and favourites* (1653), ed. Edward Arber (London, 1870), pp. 52–3.

issued by Sir Philip Sidney to the earl of Oxford on the tennis court, probably of Greenwich Palace, in 1579 – had more to do with the social rhetoric of courtesy than with medieval rites of knighthood.⁴ Indeed, Sir Philip was said to have carried a copy of Castiglione's *Courtier* in his pocket and was sometimes seen as an epitome of Castiglione's model.⁵ Oxford not merely wrote the preface for Bartholomew Clerke's Latin translation of Castiglione (1571); he was also held up to ridicule as an Italianate Englishman by Gabriel Harvey.⁶

It is obvious that in a heated situation of insults and challenges it was difficult to follow the rather intricate rules of the duelling code, and obeisance to them was not everyone's first concern.⁷ Nevertheless, the close relationship between uncivil and impolite behaviour and duelling, which was so central in the Italian theory of civil courtesy, was not lost on the English when they put its rules into practice. Sir George Wharton and Sir James Stuart fought a well-reported and fatal duel in November 1609. Having been playing cards at the earl of Essex's chambers in Whitehall, they fell foul of each other, and according to some reports 'came to blows with daggers' at the instant. The duel was occasioned by 'barbarous & unciuill Insolency in such a place before such a Company'.⁸

Lord Eure's son, William Eure, was also a victim of this new fashion in 1609. He was challenged for an altercation about hounddogs.⁹ He had

⁴ Recent scholars have relied on Fulke Greville's famous account of the incident, calling it 'the best account of this episode', see McCoy 1979, p. 3, and Duncan-Jones 1991, pp. 164–7. See Fulke Greville, 'A dedication to Sir Philip Sidney', in *The prose works of Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 38–40. There are, however, obvious problems in Greville's account, to which earlier scholars paid attention: see Wilson 1932, pp. 99–100; Denkinger 1932, pp. 146–7; Howel 1968, pp. 69–70. For a detailed discussion see Ward 1928, pp. 164–74. For other relevant documents see *The correspondence of Sir Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet*, ed. Steuart A. Pears (London, 1845), pp. 164–6, 88–9. For Sidney's own reactions see Philip Sidney, *The prose works of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Albert Feuillerat (4 vols., Cambridge, 1962), III, p. 128. Philip Sidney, 'The defence of the earl of Leicester', in Sidney, *The prose works*, III, pp. 61–71, on p. 71; for the giving of the lie, see also pp. 61, 63, 64, 65, 70.

⁵ Burke 1995, p. 97.

⁶ In 1582 Oxford fought a duel with Thomas Knyvett, a Gentleman of the Privy Chamber, see Stone 1965, pp. 233–4; Ward 1928, pp. 227–32.

⁷ PRO, SP 12/275/20; A. Hassell Smith 1974, pp. 182–5. For other examples see BL, Add. MS 27961, fos. 1–3, Historical Manuscripts Commission (hereafter HMC), *Gawdy MSS*, pp. 69–71.

⁸ Copies of Wharton's challenge and Stuart's reply are BL, Stowe MS 143, fos. 105–6. For reports of the duel see HMC, 12th report, appendix, part IV Rutland MSS, I, p. 419; HMC, Downshire MSS, II, pp. 182, 184, 185. For an earlier incident involving 'very base tearmes & vncomely words', see [anon.], *The arraignment*, sig. Aijj^r–v.

⁹ The incident is described in detail by Ralph Lord Eure to the earl of Northampton, 8 December 1609, BL, Add. MS 12514, fos. 152–3. For Eure's career as the President of Wales see *Letters from George Lord Carew to Sir Thomas Roe, 1615–1617*, ed. John Maclean, Camden Society, no. 76 (1860), pp. 91–9. For Eure's earlier local disputes see Moody 1998, pp. xlii–li; for some relevant

been hunting in Lincolnshire with diverse lords, including the earls of Rutland, Southampton, Pembroke and Montgomery, when 'one Warton a Yorkeshire man' contested 'with a servante of my sonn's', as Lord Eure described it. Again some uncivil words were uttered strengthened by a hunting rod – 'multiplinge of fowle woordes and vncivill tearmes, this Warton strucke my sonn's servante with an hunteinge rodde, neare to the presence of one of theis Earles', as Lord Eure carefully added. William Eure not merely returned the uncivil words, telling Warton that 'he was a foolishe idel fellowe . . . to abuse his man in that honorable companie'; he also gave him the lie, adding that Warton had reported 'soe manfeste an vntruthe, which he him selfe could witnesse to be false'. The lords present had tried to appease the quarrel, but as soon as William Eure had returned to his house Warton sent him a challenge, pressing him 'to yeilde him satisfaction with his sworde, for the disgrace and wronges donne him att that tyme'.

By this time the number of duels had considerably increased from the late sixteenth century. According to Lawrence Stone, the numbers of recorded duels and challenges in newsletters and correspondence jumped from five in the 1580s to nearly twenty in the 1590s. The peak was reached in the 1610s with thirty-three recorded duels and challenges.¹⁰ The actual number of duels and challenges was of course much higher. During James's reign alone Star Chamber tried about 200 cases where sending or receiving challenges or duelling itself formed a part of the charge.¹¹

The increased number of the duels was bad enough for the king. Worse still was their extensive publicity and the general recognition which the duelling code seemed to have gained. A ballad was made to commemorate the Wharton–Stuart duel,¹² and Thomas Scott used the same combat as an example in lamenting courtiers' proneness to

documents see Margaret Hoby, *The private life of an Elizabethan lady: the diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599–1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Stroud, 1998), pp. 239–45. For Lord Eure's disposition to duelling see Heal 1996, p. 174.

¹⁰ Stone 1965, pp. 245, 770. In the first decade of the new century the number was twenty-two and in the 1620s fifteen.

¹¹ *List and index to the proceedings in Star Chamber for the reign of James I (1603–1625) in the Public Record Office, London Class STAC8*, ed. Thomas G. Barnes (Chicago, 1975), pp. 159–63. See also BL, Royal and King's MS 18.B.vii, fo. 1, which contains an account of proceedings of the Council of Northern Marches and Wales. Bacon as Attorney-General exhibited information against two young gentlemen for a challenge and combat 'Contrarie to your Majesty's Edict against Duells'.

¹² [Anon.], *A la[mentable?] ballad of a combate lately fought, near London, between Sir James Steward, and Sir George Wharton, knights* (London, n.d.).

duelling in his *Philomythie* in 1616.¹³ There were several reported duels in 1610,¹⁴ so much so that John Chamberlain wrote to Ralph Winwood that it would be better for 'our court gallants' to have a foreign war to 'vent theyre superfluous valour then to brabble so much as they do here at home: for in one weeke we had three or fowre great quarrels'.¹⁵ This state of affairs could obviously send a wrong message – that the king must favour duelling. Reporting the incident involving his son to the earl of Northampton, the Lord Eure wrote:

the late reporte of the vntymely, and more vnfortunate ende, of the two worthy gentlemen Sir George Wharton and Mr. Steward hatbe nurrished a conceite in theis parts, that his Majestie wilbe pleasede, seeing the dangerous events of theis suddaine quarrells, and the prone inclination of his subiects to imitate, and fasten houlde of duellos doctrine.¹⁶

Of all the duels in Jacobean England it was that between Edward Sackville, brother of the earl of Dorset, and Lord Bruce of Kinloss, son of the king's old friend and adviser in 1613 which received the widest publicity and forced the king and his ministers to take more decisive action to abolish duelling.¹⁷ Sackville and Bruce had been friends but had fallen out. Already in January 1613 they attempted to cross to the Continent, but bad weather kept Bruce at Dover. Through the king's intervention the quarrel was dropped for a while, but in May it was renewed. This time Lord Bruce went to France, according to some reports, to learn to fence. It was Bruce who sent the challenge and Sackville readily promised to give Bruce any 'satisfaction your swoord can render you'.¹⁸ Towards the end of the summer they fought outside Bergen-op-Zoom

¹³ Thomas Scot, *Philomythie or philomythologie wherin outlandish birds, beasts, and fishes, are taught to speake true Englishe plainly* (London, 1616), sigs. I2^v–4^v.

¹⁴ See HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, pp. 279, 280. See also HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, pp. 302, 371, 407, 408, 480; HMC, *12th report, appendix, part IV*; *Rutland MSS*, I, p. 426. HMC, *Buccleuch and Queensberry MSS*, I, pp. 99–100. See in general Stone 1965, p. 247, Baldick 1965, pp. 63–5, Millingen 1841, II, p. 12.

¹⁵ John Chamberlain, *The letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. N. E. McClure (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1939), I, pp. 297–8.

¹⁶ Ralph Lord Eure to the earl of Northampton, 8 December 1609, BL, Add. MS 12514, fos. 152–3.

¹⁷ See in general David Lawrence Smith 1989, pp. 21–30. Phillips 1930, I, pp. 295–303, HMC *Portland MSS*, IX, pp. 525–6, in both of which many of the documents are printed. It is difficult to say how many of these duels were occasioned by the rivalry between the Scots and the English in James's court. For a pertinent analysis of the court see Cuddy 1987; Cuddy 1989. Bowers 1971, p. 32, suggests that it was not merely 'the ill-feeling between the two nations' but also the fact that the Scots were 'nearer to barbarism than the English' which accounted for the growth in duelling.

¹⁸ Folger Shakespeare Library, MS x.d.165.

(near Antwerp). Both were seriously wounded and Bruce died from the wounds a few days later. 'This encounter', as David Smith has called it, 'was one of the minor sensations of Jacobean England.' It was rehearsed in contemporary newsletters and copies of the correspondence leading to the duel circulated widely. It was still well remembered in the eighteenth century.¹⁹

It is of crucial importance to note the mixed feelings with which the news about the duel was received. On the one hand, the whole affair, its honourable progress and Sackville's fair conduct won general recognition. 'His fair carriage and equal hazard', wrote Henry Peyton to William Trumbull, 'maketh even his adversaries speak favourably.'²⁰ The public opinion seemed to countenance duelling and its code of honour. Yet, not everyone was pleased. Sackville returned back to England later in the autumn, feeling 'no violence of H.M.'s displeasure, though his friends feared he should'. In November it was reported that Sackville knew 'how little gracious he is',²¹ but in December he was still nursing hopes of being able to participate in a tilt.²² In 1614 he had to leave England, returning only in September 1615.²³ Nonetheless, killing Lord Bruce in the duel did not stymie Sackville's subsequent career.

Although the duel between Sackville and Bruce caused a sensation, news about other possible duels was running riot. Thus when John Chamberlain informed Dudley Carleton about the outcome of the Sackville–Bruce duel, he further mentioned five other quarrels which were expected to end in affairs of honour.²⁴ The best-known of all these was the quarrel between the earl of Essex and his brother-in-law Henry Howard. Howard had insulted Essex's virility and Essex had retorted with a challenge, which Howard had accepted. The first appointed day did not succeed, and a new date was set for the duel in Flanders. Both parties appeared there. The seconds had several meetings, and Essex even suggested that he was content 'to receive reasonable satisfaction' from Howard, but Howard would have nothing of this. He came over, he replied, to give satisfaction with his sword. Sir John Throckmorton,

¹⁹ Anne-Pierre Coustard de Massi, *The history of duelling. In two parts*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1770), pp. 152–3; [anon.], *Thoughts on duelling*, p. 7; Hey, *A dissertation on duelling*, p. 2; [anon.], *Reflections on duelling*, pp. 32–7.

²⁰ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, iv, p. 202. ²¹ *Letters of John Chamberlain*, i, pp. 487–8.

²² *CSPD 1611–1618*, p. 213.

²³ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, iv, pp. 181, 186; HMC, *Supplementary report on the Mar and Kellie MSS*, pp. 53–4.

²⁴ *The letters of John Chamberlain*, i, pp. 474–5. See also Henry Ellis ed., *Original letters, illustrative of English history*, 2nd series (4 vols., London, 1827), pp. 234–5; HMC, *Salisbury MSS*, pt xxii, p. 30. For examples of quarrels from early 1613 see HMC, *Portland MSS*, ix, p. 31.

who was carefully following the development of the quarrel in Flushing, regretted to Viscount Lisle on 4 September that 'nether his Matys lawes nor noe other course can be thought on to prevent these pernicious Duells'. Two days later he reported the coming of Essex and pointed out that he was in no position to stop the duel 'unles I had better authority then myne owne'. On the contrary had he met Essex he would have 'done him honour [rather] then have offered to have done him the least discourtioussye'. Although Throckmorton expected the duel to take place the next day, two days later he was still waiting for the fight. Then by 10 September he had received a message that the king and the council wanted him to stop the duel. Although the message came 'from a particuler freind and soe noe warrant or autentick power unto me to proseade in suche a beusynes as is fitt', Throckmorton decided to act, surmising that 'the service that perhaps I might doe theirin . . . would be of good acceptance with his Maty and the State'. Consequently the next day Throckmorton could write that 'for this present that pernicious duell is prevented'.²⁵

Clearly, duelling seemed to be getting out of control and the king finally decided to take more drastic action against it. But this was not the first time that the theory of duelling had been questioned. On the contrary, anti-duelling arguments appeared almost as soon as the duelling theory had been stated. Perhaps the earliest systematic criticism of duelling habits and code took place in Lodovick Bryskett's dialogue, *A discourse of ciuill life*, which was written as early as in the 1580s although published only in 1606. In his discussion of justice, Bryskett emphasised the role of truth and the harmfulness of lying, and the interlocutors keenly launched into a long digression on duelling.²⁶ At the same time duelling was criticised in a number of moral treatises translated from French. These included Pierre de La Primaudaye's *The French academie* and Mathieu Coignet's *Politique discourses vpon trveth and lying* translated by Edward Hoby, son of Thomas Hoby, the translator of Castiglione, both published in 1586; François de La Noue's *The politicke and militarie discourses* translated by Edward Aggard in 1587, and Bernard de Loque's *Discourses on warre, and single combat* translated by John Eliot in 1591.²⁷ Very soon similar arguments emerged in a number of English moral treatises.

²⁵ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, iv, pp. 190–1, 205–6; *The letters of John Chamberlain*, i, pp. 474, 484; HMC, *de L'Isle & Dudley MSS*, ii, pp. 120–3. See also Lindley 1993, p. 95.

²⁶ Bryskett, *A discourse of ciuill life*, pp. 63–91.

²⁷ Billacois 1986, pp. 139–40. De Loque was a pseudonym for François de Saillans, a Protestant minister from Dauphiné.

Amongst these were George Gifford's *A treatise of true fortitude* (1594), John Norden's *The mirror of honor* (1597), Henry Crosse's *The schoole of pollicie* (1605), Robert Glover's *Nobilitas politica vel civilis* (1608), which was translated into English as a part of Thomas Milles's *The catalogue of honor* (1610). But they also became a staple topic in numerous books and manuals on warfare from William Garrard's *The art of warre* (1591) to the *Articles of militarie discipline* (1639) composed for the Covenant Army and Robert Ward's *Anima'dversions of warre* (1639) dedicated to Charles I.

By the 1590s duelling was also sharply criticised by many writers who in their censure made use of their native past in general and its chivalric traditions in particular. These critics included common lawyers and heralds, antiquaries and traditional masters of defence, all of whom found foreign, especially Italian, influence highly menacing. In their attempts to resist the spread of foreign ideas, they availed themselves of their indigenous culture of single combats.

Moreover, from the 1590s onwards the preachers included duelling in their evergrowing list of social vices which should be eradicated. In February 1603 a young preacher 'made a finical boysterous exordium, and rann him selfe out almost dry before he was halfe through' when he thundered 'against duellisme, or single combat', saying that 'yf two goe into the field with purpose to fight, an[d] the one be slayne, he is murderour of himselfe'.²⁸ Religious arguments against duelling remained strong throughout the period. Since conscience was widely believed to hold together the social and political order, it was considered extremely important to provide individuals with the knowledge of right and wrong. And duelling was a staple topic in this casuistical literature.²⁹

Of all these denunciations of the duel, however, the most thorough, vociferous and systematic occurred in the 1610s. The English had closely followed the French attempts to suppress duelling. In 1605 Dudley Carleton had reported that the French king was 'framing a seuere Edict against duels',³⁰ and in 1609 the English had not only received news about continental duels,³¹ but had also closely observed the framing of

²⁸ John Manningham, *The diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple 1602–1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover, 1976), pp. 189–90.

²⁹ For an excellent summary see Thomas 1993. See e.g. W[illiam] Perkins, *The whole treatise of the cases of conscience, distinguished into three bookes* (Cambridge, 1606); William Gouge, *Of domesticall duties* (London, 1622); Arthur Warwick, *Spare-minutes; or, resolved meditations and premeditated resolutions*, 2nd edn (London, 1634); John Syme, *Lifes preservative against self-killing* (London, 1637); William Ames, *Conscience with the power and cases thereof* (n.p., 1639); William Ames, *The marrow of sacred divinity, drawne out of the holy Scriptures, and the interpreters thereof, and brought into method* (London, 1642).

³⁰ Carleton to Sir Thomas Edmondes 1605, BL, Stowe MS 168, fos. 225–6.

³¹ See HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, p. 95.

the French edict against duelling.³² When the edict was finally published in June 1609 it immediately provoked positive response in England,³³ and was soon translated and printed there.³⁴

The edict failed to abate duelling in France, and challenges continued to be issued and duels to be fought apace. Newsletters from France were sprinkled with news about these encounters often together with moral denunciations.³⁵ Having reported two duels, Jean Beaulieu went on in his letter to William Trumbull: 'Such monstrous and horrible accidents this unfortunate country doth nowadays bring forth as that many men do apprehend some heavy judgment of God's wrath against it.'³⁶

Despite all the interest in French duels, it was of course the native developments which provoked the most shocking news and shaped the debate in England. The king and some of his ministers watched the steadily increasing numbers of duels with growing dismay. James I had planned to publish an anti-duelling proclamation after the Wharton–Stuart duel in 1609. Thomas Lodge reported to William Trumbull less than a fortnight after the duel that 'our general news is that his Majesty being displeased with the fatal Duellums that are rife in our country, is minded to publish an especial edict against them'.³⁷ In mid October 1613, only a month after the Essex–Howard affair, the king published 'A Proclamation prohibiting the publishing of any reports or writings of Duels'. The royal logic was that news and reports about duels were the main incentive for other gentlemen to succumb to this fashion, and preventing these news and reports was an effective way of preventing duelling to spread as well. But the proclamation did not only forbid to 'publish any Discourse of the maner, either of their meetings appointed with their parties, or their fighting'. It further banned all publications dealing with 'that quarrellous busnesse' – all treatises about duelling.³⁸

James had always found the various forms of single combats utterly distasteful. In Scotland he had been able by and large to eradicate bloodfeuds,³⁹ a fact which Raleigh commented as 'a most kingly and

³² BL, Stowe MS 171, fos. 77, 93. See also HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, p. 86.

³³ See BL, Cotton MS Titus C.I., fo. 402.

³⁴ [Anon.], *An edict or statute lately set forth by the French King, concerning the prohibition and punishment of single and priuate combats*, transl. anon. (London, 1609); Pierre Matthieu, *The heroyck life and deplorable death of the most Christian king Henry the fourth*, transl. Edward Grimeston (London, 1612).

³⁵ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, III, pp. 100, 105, 230–1, 257, 350–1.

³⁶ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, IV, p. 8; see also V, pp. 21, 46, 113, 287, 21, 145.

³⁷ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, p. 189. ³⁸ *Stuart royal proclamations*, I, pp. 295–7.

³⁹ See Keith M. Brown 1986; Wormald 1980.

Christian-like deed'.⁴⁰ James had condemned single combats in 1598 in both the *Basilicon Doron* and *The trew law of free monarchies*. 'Neither', he told Prince Henry in the *Basilicon Doron*, 'commit your quarrell to bee tried by a Duell: for beside that generally all Duell appeareth to bee vnlawful, committing the quarrell, as it were, to a lot; whereof there is no warrant in the Scripture, since the abrogating of the olde Lawe: it is specially moste vn-lawfull in the person of a King'.⁴¹

In 1613 suppressing reports of duels and combats was obviously not enough, however, and James had decided to take even more direct action. Consequently, a proclamation against 'Duelles' themselves was also planned. Francis Bacon wrote his own proposal, where he advised the king that 'there be published a grave and severe proclamation, induced by the overflow of the present mischief'.⁴² As the recently appointed Attorney-General, Bacon proposed in December that the offenders should be prosecuted in Star Chamber. This had occasionally been done since the beginning of the reign,⁴³ and in December Bacon announced in Star Chamber that henceforth the court would prosecute 'all that challenged others, or went beyond seas to fight'. John Chamberlain surmised that this was likely to prove 'a better course to cut of duells then any that hath ben yet thought on'.⁴⁴ There was a convenient case of a challenge sent, involving two obscure persons, which Bacon brought before Star Chamber at the first sitting of the court in Hilary Term, in January 1614. His charge, together with the decree of the court, was soon published.⁴⁵ It became one of the most central anti-duelling texts and although it was not reprinted it was still constantly referred to in the eighteenth century. In 1720 it was thought to be 'well worth reading' and in 1784 Richard Hey called it 'a full and methodical Speech upon the Subject of Duels'.⁴⁶

In 1613, the anti-duelling proclamation was mostly written, however, by Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton. It was ready for publication

⁴⁰ Walter Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works* (Oxford, 1829), iv, p. 465.

⁴¹ James VI and I, *Basilicon Doron*, in King James VI and I, *Political writings*, ed. Johann P. Sommerville (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 1–61, at p. 32. See also *The trew law of free monarchies* (1598), in *Political writings*, pp. 62–84, at p. 80. For James's determination to prevent duels see HMC, *Downshire MSS*, II, pp. 279, 280; *The court and times of James I*, II, p. 81.

⁴² Bacon, *The letters and the life* (7 vols., London, 1861–74), IV, 397. See also Jardine and Stewart 1998, pp. 341–2.

⁴³ *List and index*, pp. 159–63. ⁴⁴ *The letters of John Chamberlain*, I, p. 491.

⁴⁵ Bacon, *The charge*. A modern edition is to be found in *Francis Bacon*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford, 1996), pp. 304–13.

⁴⁶ John Finet, *A letter from Paris written to a nobleman* (London, 1720), sigs. [ar^r–3^v]; Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 349–51; Hey, *A dissertation on duelling*, p. 2.

in November,⁴⁷ but was finally issued in February 1614 as a proclamation 'against private Challenges and Combats'.⁴⁸ The message of the proclamation was strengthened by an anonymous treatise published in conjunction with it. *A publication of his Majesties edict, and severe censure against priuate combats and combatants* was printed by the king's printer, and it certainly aired royal opinions. It has sometimes been attributed to the king himself, but at the time of its publication it was 'commonly attributed to Sir Fra: Bacon'. Yet when John Chamberlain perused the volume a little, he 'did quickly acquit' Bacon, 'and did easilie discern that yt came from some higher hand'.⁴⁹ Chamberlain was quite right, for the treatise was composed by the earl of Northampton. Writing such a treatise befitted the aged counsellor.⁵⁰ He was a scion of an old aristocratic family, a fact of which he was notoriously proud. Indeed, upholding the dignity of the nobility was one of his favourite themes. His father, the earl of Surrey, had introduced Italian Renaissance forms to English poetry, and his cousin, the earl of Oxford was ridiculed by Gabriel Harvey as an Italianate Englishman. Moreover, he was exceptionally well educated, and, significantly, had both studied and taught civil law at Cambridge, but had no formal education in the common law. He knew his Castiglione well, having meticulously annotated his own copy of *The courtier*.⁵¹ Linda Peck has aptly called Northampton 'the consummate Jacobean courtier'.⁵²

By 1614, opposing duelling was no new thing for Northampton. On the contrary, he had been preoccupied with it from at least 1609, when the first plans to publish a proclamation against duelling had been made. In February 1610 Sir John Finet informed Northampton from Paris about the details of duelling in France. In November 1613 Francis Cottingham wrote to Northampton about his meeting with the Spanish Ambassador who 'fell into a long discourse' of the strict laws against duelling in Spain.⁵³ Northampton compiled a detailed collectanea on duelling code and habits. He also composed two or three manuscript treatises on duelling.⁵⁴ This preliminary material was put to great use when he wrote

⁴⁷ Earl of Northampton to Sir Thomas Lake, 18 November 1613, PRO, SP 14/75/13, fo. 32.

⁴⁸ *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 303. ⁴⁹ *The letters of John Chamberlain*, 1, p. 509.

⁵⁰ See Peck 1982; Peck 1991.

⁵¹ I am grateful to Peter Burke for this information; see also Peck 1982, n4 on p. 219.

⁵² Peck 1982, p. 3. For a contemporary acknowledgement see C[ovell], *Polimanteia*, sig. 03^{r-v}.

⁵³ Henry Ellis ed., *Original letters illustrative of English history*, 1st series (3 vols., London, 1824), III, pp. 106–10.

⁵⁴ These are to be found in BL, Cotton MS Titus C.IV, and Cotton MS Titus C.I. A tract 'Duello foil'd' is often ascribed to Northampton, but the copy of the tract in Titus C.I, fos. 358 ff., contains his underlinings and annotations, which suggests that it was written by someone else; see Peck 1982, pp. 160–5, and n57 p. 247; Bowers 1937a.

A publication of his Majesties edict, which contains many passages referring to foreign habits of duelling and a detailed exposition of the theory of the point of honour.⁵⁵

There were, so Northampton wrote in his treatise, 'two speciall benefits' to be expected from the proclamation and 'publishing to the world Our constant purpose, to abolish vtterly all Challenges to fight in the field'. First, the number of offences would decrease dramatically, as people would become fearful 'of sharpe punishments imposed vnder Our hand and Seale'. But the proclamation was not merely expected to use the stick, it was also designed to provide the carrot. Its 'second benefit', Northampton pointed out, was 'prouidence, in deuising meanes that are apt and proper to giue satisfaction for all kinds of offences, that touch honour in the least degree'.⁵⁶

Both Bacon and Northampton advised the king that the final solution to duelling should be found in parliament.⁵⁷ Not everyone believed these assurances, however, and in the opening ceremonies of the new parliament in the spring 1614 the king told the MPs that it was wrong to assume that he was planning to replace laws by proclamations. It was his 'long proclamation against duels' which had given rise to this misunderstanding. The proclamation was never intended to be a law, but merely 'to express myself against fighting and massacring one another until such time as a statute could be made against it, which I conceived to be a godly action'.⁵⁸ James and many of his subjects fulminated against duelling and listed it amongst the most pernicious social vices, but given that the duelling theory had gained wide publicity and that the attendant social custom had won general recognition, as attested by the aftermath of the Bruce-Sackville duel, it is not surprising that the MPs did not heed the king's strictures. During those heated weeks from early April to early June 1614, the king's suggestion for this social policy legislation was quickly buried under the speedily deteriorating atmosphere of the Addled Parliament. Moreover, neither the proclamation against duels nor the one against reports of duels achieved its ends. Newsletters continued to rehearse challenges and duels,⁵⁹ although in some cases severe

⁵⁵ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 14–16, 47–8, 98–9, 103, 39–58.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–18.

⁵⁷ Bacon, *Letters*, iv, p. 397; [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 35–7, 41–2.

⁵⁸ *Proceedings in parliament 1614 (House of Commons)*, ed. Maija Jansson, *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, 172 (Philadelphia, 1988), p. 18; HMC, *Hastings MSS*, iv, p. 233.

⁵⁹ HMC, *Downshire MSS*, v, pp. 209, 277; *The letters of John Chamberlain*, II, pp. 30, 300; PRO SP 14/92/25; SP 14/93/24; SP 14/93/25; SP 14/94/52; SP 14/95/8; SP 14/95/22 fos. 40^{r–v}, 65^r; PRO SP 14/115/7; SP 14/116/32.

punishments and even executions were expected, because the king was 'a professed Enemie to Duells'.⁶⁰

In November 1616 two young gentlemen, Thomas Bellingham and Brice Christmas wished to go overseas to fight, but they were stopped at Dover and brought to Star Chamber. James thought this was a suitable occasion to remind his subjects of his 'seuer & sharpe Edict' against duelling, and so he made a speech against duelling, calling himself a 'Rex pacificus'. Bellingham and Christmas were imprisoned and fined, but already by March 1617 they were pardoned.⁶¹

The opponents of duelling continued their campaigning. In the mid 1610s, in the Beaumont and Fletcher plays the positive attitude towards duelling turned into a negative one.⁶² In 1618, a treatise appeared entitled *The peace-maker: or, Great Brittaines blessing*. Although the tract contained a more general plea for peace, it was also designed to demonstrate 'the idlenesse of a quarrelling reputation', as the title-page informed the reader.⁶³ In 1619 Sir William Wiseman brought out his *The Christian knight*, which contained a long and thorough attack on duelling, and the whole campaign was continued by several treatises including Guillaume de Chevalier's *The ghosts of the deceased sievrs, de Villemor, and de Fontaines*, translated by Thomas Heigham and published in 1624, the *Antidvello*, written by the French Protestant Jean d'Espagne in 1632 and an anonymous *Duel-ease* in 1635.⁶⁴ Moreover, an attempt was made in 1621 to revive James's suggestion for anti-duelling legislation. There was a draft bill 'to prevent private combates', according to which it would be 'dishonorable' and 'disgracefull' that 'by private combates' men made themselves 'Judges and revengers' of their own cases. It was suggested that JPs would be given authority to imprison anyone sending a challenge, and in the case of peers two Privy Councillors could imprison them. It is possible that the bill was read twice.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ PRO, SP 14/95/22 fo. 65^r.

⁶¹ PRO, SP 14/89/42; 14/90/65; *The letters of John Chamberlain*, II, p. 54; *CSPD 1611-18*, p. 450.

⁶² Maxwell 1966, pp. 84-106.

⁶³ [Thomas Middleton], *The peace-maker: or, Great Brittaines blessing* (1618) (London, 1619), title-page.

⁶⁴ Guillaume de Chevalier, *The ghosts of the deceased sievrs, de Villemor, and de Fontaines. A most necessarie discourse of duells*, transl. Thomas Heigham (Cambridge, 1624); [Jean d'Espagne], *Anti-dvello: or, a treatise, in which is discussed the lawfulnessse and vnlawfulnessse of single combats* (London, 1632); G. F., *Duel-ease. A worde with valiant spirits* (London, 1635).

⁶⁵ PRO, SP 14/120/133, fo. 263; Russell 1979, p. 47, argues that the bill made no progress in the Commons. But a 'bill for takynge away tryall by battle', which might have been the same bill, was twice read. *Commons debates 1621*, ed. Wallace Notestein, France Helen Relf and Hartley Simpson, (7 vols., New Haven, 1935), II, p. 147; III, pp. 93, 408; IV, p. 114, 263; V, 263, 309, 318; VI, p. 18.

The critics of duelling did not see it as an isolated phenomenon but rather as a recent but all the more integral part of the wide network of social misdemeanour. The earl of Northampton firmly believed that challenges, which had become common 'within these few yeeres', occurred in such places as 'the Tennis Courts, in bowling Allies, Dicing houses, and all houses of game'.⁶⁶ Many critics linked duelling with drinking. Although the duellists vehemently denied that their habits had any 'relation to tobacco, nor to Bacchus', their castigators were little convinced; quarrels leading to duels, the critics argued again and again, occurred most often in 'an Ale-House' where 'The Primum Mobile is browne Ale'.⁶⁷ Thomas Middleton connected this new fashion not only with 'The Smoke of fashion, that Witch Tobacco, which hath quite blowne away the smoke of Hospitalitie', but also with 'a Bewitching Sorcerie, that inchaunts the spirits of young men'.⁶⁸

Whether it was sport and games or drinking and smoking which begot duels, all the critics agreed that the problem was growing fast and was getting out of hand. When the king issued his proclamation against the 'reports or writings of Duels', he stated that duels had become 'a common custome, which doth daily come to Our Eares'. It was specifically these publications that multiplied them, whose dissemination the proclamation tried to curb.⁶⁹ Bacon agreed. It was 'a mischeefe' which 'groweth every day',⁷⁰ and the claim that duels occurred 'daily' soon became a truism.⁷¹ Although the steadily increasing number of duels was truly menacing, Bacon could see something salutary in this development. Because duelling was first and foremost a vogue, it could be expected to wither away as quickly as it had appeared. Bacon believed that duelling would go out of fashion as soon as it radiated to wider social classes. 'Nay I should thinke', he told Star Chamber, 'that men of birth and quality will leaue the practise, when it begins to bee vilified and come so lowe as to Barbers-surgeons and Butchers, and such base mechanicall persons.'⁷²

⁶⁶ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 33, 58, 107.

⁶⁷ G. F., *Duel-ease*, pp. 66–7. See also e.g. Anthony Stafford, *Staffords Niobe: or his age of teares* (London, 1611), p. 30; Thomas Pestel, *Sermons and deuotions old and new* (London, 1659), p. 336.

⁶⁸ [Middleton], *The peace-maker*, sig. D2^{r-v}. ⁶⁹ *Stuart royal proclamations*, I, pp. 295, 296

⁷⁰ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 6.

⁷¹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 39; PRO, SP14/132/83, fo. 184. The same tract is in BL, Cotton MS Titus C.1. fos. 404ff, and has been printed as 'Of a lie', in John Gutch ed., *Collectanea curiosa; or miscellaneous tracts* (2 vols., Oxford, 1781), I, pp. 12–19. For the alleged frequency of duels see also G. F., *Duel-ease*, sig. A4^v.

⁷² Bacon, *The charge*, p. 6. See also HMC, *Portland MSS*, ix, pp. 30–1.

THE ENGLISH EXPERIENCE

Many scholars have seen the rise of the duel of honour in Elizabethan England as an integral part of the revival of chivalric values and concepts.⁷³ Although such an account has gained wide currency, we have seen that it is misleading. Rather than being a remnant from indigenous medieval chivalric culture, duelling was imported into England as part of the Italian Renaissance ideology of courtly civility. Moreover, many aspects of the Elizabethan chivalric revival, I argue, should be seen rather as a partial reaction against this Italian culture in general and the private duel of honour in particular than as arguments in its favour. When the English expounded in the 1590s the martial heritage of their native past they did so in part to counter the highly menacing foreign influence of the private duel.

The first form of critical reaction came from the defenders of the traditional English martial arts. The emergence of the duel and of the rapier were closely entangled with one another, but the teachers of martial arts did not come into being with the rapier. England had had masters of arms at least since the thirteenth century. In 1540 Henry VIII had granted Letters Patent to the London Masters of Defence, with the privilege of controlling all those who kept schools in other parts of the realm. The English masters showed great interest in the rapier, which is often mentioned in the surviving documents of the Elizabethan Masters of Defence,⁷⁴ and the English preface to Giacomo di Grassi's manual of fencing paid lip-service to the Masters of Defence, whose 'Arte is herein so honoured'.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the London Masters were prone to keeping to traditional arms, vehemently objecting to the more fashionable weapons.⁷⁶

There were several striking differences between the Italian teachers and the native masters. First, whereas the latter taught mainly lower orders in society, the Italian masters focused on teaching a more restricted group of gentlemen.⁷⁷ Second, whereas the Italian art of fencing was

⁷³ For documentation see above, pp. 6–10.

⁷⁴ Herbert Berry, *The noble science: a study and transcription of Sloane MS 2530, papers of the Masters of Defence of London, temp. Henry VIII to 1590* (Newark, 1991), pp. 47, 49, 51, 53, 55, 81, 115, 117. See also George Buck, 'The third vniversitie of England', in John Stow, *Annales, or generall chronicle of England* (London, 1615), p. 985; Anglo 2000, pp. 7–14.

⁷⁵ di Grassi, *His true arte*, sig. ¶¶1^v. ⁷⁶ Aylward 1956, p. 26.

⁷⁷ See e.g. Berry, *The noble science*, p. 111; Anglin 1984, pp. 395–6; Aylward 1956, pp. 2–3; George Silver, *Paradoxes of defence* (London, 1599), pp. 64–5; Stone 1965, p. 244. See also Michel de Montaigne, *The essayes of Michel Lord of Montaigne*, transl. John Florio (1601) (3 vols., London, 1910), II, pp. 422–4.

designed and advocated solely for single combats, the more traditional English art was still alleged to be useful in wars.⁷⁸ Many contemporaries censured the rapier or 'light dancing swords'.⁷⁹

Most importantly, English Masters of Defence attacked their Italian rivals, accusing them of importing new weapons and new habits and customs, which would occasion a wholesale corruption of the indigenous customs of their venerable tradition. Thomas Nashe wrote in his *Pierce Pennilesse his supplication to the diuell* (1592): 'O Italie, the Academie of manslaughter, the sporting place of murther, the Apothecary-shop of poyson for all Nations: how many kind of weapons hast thou inuented for malice?'⁸⁰ Admiring the traditional robust martial arts of the English, Stephen Gosson lamented that they had been replaced by delicate foreign customs. Schools of defence could serve the common good only by spreading the knowledge in weapons which was 'necessary in a common wealth'. But traditional schools had been superseded by fencing schools which advocated the new shibboleth of duelling. Those who attended these schools 'thinke themselves no Scholers, if they bee not able to finde out a knotte in every rushe'. Gosson was convinced, however, that instead of a duel, 'neither hee that offered iniurie should haue his will, nor hee that was threatened, take any hurte, but bothe be contended and shake handes'.⁸¹ In 1632 Donald Lupton disparaged the new fencing schools, claiming that in them 'Schollers seeme to bee strangely taught, for they do nothing but play'; indeed, 'there are many blows giuen and taken, yet little or no blood spilt'.⁸²

George Silver, a native fencing-master, who has sometimes been called 'the father of English swordmen', launched a thorough attack against the Italian teachers, their art, the rapier and ultimately the duel.⁸³ The animosity between Silver and Vicentio Saviolo prompted

⁷⁸ Thomas Procter, *Of the knowledge and conducte of warres* (n.p., 1578), fo. 22^r; Silver, *Paradoxes of defence*, sig. A4^r. See also the proclamation against 'Steelets, Pocket Daggers, Pocket Dagges and Pistols', published in 1616, *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, pp. 359–60.

⁷⁹ Thomas Smith, *A discourse of the commonweal of this realm of England*, ed. Mary Dewar (Charlottesville, 1969), p. 82; John Smyth, *Certain discourses concerning the formes and effects of diuers sorts of weapons, and other verie important matters militarie* (London, 1590), fos. 3^v–4^r.

⁸⁰ Thomas Nashe, *The works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (5 vols., Oxford, 1988), 1, p. 186.

⁸¹ Stephen Gosson, *The schoole of abuse* (1579), ed. Edward Arber (London, 1868), pp. 45–7. See also Stephen Gosson, *The trumpet of warre. A sermon preached at Paules Crosse the seuenth of Maie 1598* (London, 1598), sig. B8^v, on sig. E8^v Gosson reveals his familiarity with the technicalities of Italian fencing.

⁸² Donald Lupton, *London and the countrey carbonadoed and quartred into seuerall characters* (London, 1632), pp. 83–5.

⁸³ For Silver, see Aylward 1956, pp. 61–73; Castle 1969, pp. 89–95; Hutton 1901, pp. 150–6. The quotation is from Hutton 1901, p. 153. For a detailed technical discussion of Silver's reply, see Turner and Soper 1990, pp. 82–103.

the Englishman together with his brother Toby to challenge Vincentio and Jeronimo Saviolo 'to play' with several weapons, from the rapier and the single sword to the battleaxe and the morris-pike. The Silver brothers had publicised their challenge, but the Saviolos did not turn up.⁸⁴ Having failed to show the superiority of the English Masters of Defence and their traditional weapons in practice, Silver decided to avail himself of Saviolo's offer to use the equally mighty sword of the pen. In 1599 he published his *Paradoxes of defence*, which was directed against the Italian fencing in general and against Saviolo's book in particular. Silver strengthened the message by penning another treatise, 'Bref instructions vpon my paradoxes of defence', which remained in manuscript.⁸⁵ Silver complained that fencing had become something akin to a fashion; it kept changing all the time, because its true principles had been lost. Truth was permanent and hence had always been and would always be the same. Silver juxtaposed his English forefathers and their true art of defence to the Italians and their false art of fencing. Hurling invective at Saviolo and other teachers of that ilk, Silver warned his readers of 'false teachers of Defence'. He had, he opened his treatise, perceived 'the great abuses by the Italian Teachers of Offence . . . the great errors, inconueniences, & false resolutions they haue brought'. Saviolo's book was completely useless; Silver had found in it 'neither true rule for the perfect teaching of true fight, nor true ground of true fight, neither sence or reason for due prooffe thereof'.⁸⁶

The ultimate reason for the Italian teachers' futility and the uselessness of their books was the choice of their weapon – the rapier. Silver's title-page proclaimed that the tract would not only prove 'the trve grounds of Fight to be in the short auncient weapons, and that the short Sword hath aduantage of the long Sword or long Rapier', but also display 'the weaknesse and imperfection of the Rapier-fights'. The book did not disappoint the reader: the rebuttal of the rapier formed its overriding theme, and Silver even made a heroic attempt to demonstrate that a cut was quicker than a thrust.⁸⁷ The rapier – 'a childish toy' – was utterly useless in wars, being fit 'to murder poultrie, not for men of Honour to trie the battell with their foes'.⁸⁸ Silver also argued that, although inefficient in wars, the rapier was too efficient in single combats. He had witnessed 'the great losse of our English gallants, which we daily suffer

⁸⁴ Silver, *Paradoxes of defence*, pp. 66–7.

⁸⁵ George Silver, 'Bref instructions vpon my paradoxes of defence' [1599?], in James L. Jackson ed., *Three Elizabethan fencing-manuals* (Delmar, 1972), pp. 571–634.

⁸⁶ Silver, *Paradoxes of defence*, sigs. A3^r–4^r, pp. 1, 70–2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19. ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, sigs. A4^r, A5^r–v, pp. 32–3.

by these imperfect fights'. The problem with the rapier was that it did not provide 'sufficient defence for our bodies in our fight'.⁸⁹

Most importantly, Silver declared that the Italians had completely misunderstood the ultimate aim and thus the true nature of single combats. He could not agree that the killing of the opponent was the proper aim in a single combat. The traditional English single combats used to be trials for valour and skill but they had now been turned by 'these Italian peacemakers' into a matter of fortune: 'kill or be killed is the dreadfull issue of these diuellish imperfect fights'. They had made the English forsake their lives 'in priuate fights' – 'to butcher one another here at home in peace'.⁹⁰ The rapier had thus transformed quite harmless single combats where the combatants' valour and skill had been at stake into killing affrays where virtues played no role but whose outcome was determined by whimsical fortune. In the true art of defence it was possible to achieve perfection and thus it would be impossible for your opponent to hurt you. The gratifying consequence was that, as Silver put it, 'yf both haue the full perfection of true fyght, then the one will not be able to hurt the other at what perfyte weapon so ever'.⁹¹ For Silver, the ideal single combat was a pure display of outstanding art and talent.

Silver wanted to uphold the traditional single combat against the new fashionable Italian duel. A single combat was for him a way to win martial honour of chivalry rather than to defend one's tarnished gentlemanly reputation. He juxtaposed this traditional chivalric combat with the combat advocated by the Italians, to their utter detriment. It was thus not only the first book of Saviolo's treatise (dealing with fencing) in which Silver found much wanting. The second book of honour was equally misleading. According to Silver, Saviolo had written 'discours of honour & honourable quarrels making many reasons to preserve meane & wayes to enter the feild & combat, both for the lye & other disgraces'. But such a discourse, Silver claimed, did nothing but open the way to 'diabolicall devyces' and to 'villayne & distruction as hurtynge, Maymynge & Murtheringe or kyllinge'.⁹²

Many gentlemen, lured away by Saviolo from their traditional customs to adopt these fashionable Italian follies, ignored the time and place where they lived and looked 'into the danger of the lawe til it be to[o]

⁸⁹ Ibid., sig. A4^v, p. 56. ⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 57, sigs. A4^v–5^r, pp. 3–4, 7–8.

⁹¹ Silver, 'Bref instructions', p. 578. See also Churchyard, *Churchyards challenge*, p. 60.

⁹² Silver, 'Bref instructions', pp. 573, 575, 578; but cf. p. 581 where Silver wrote that when you 'talke with great men of honourable qualitie', you must be extremely careful with your words so that 'a foolish word, or froward Answer geve no occasyon of offence'.

late'. It was therefore improper to seek revenge when abuse was offered and temper ran high. Silver argued that to use force was becoming for beasts but men should use reason and when they could not forbear injuries, they should seek revenge 'by Cyvill Order & prof, by good & holsom lawes'. 'I see no reason', Silver concluded, 'why a Man should adventure hys lyf & estate upon every tryfle, but should rather put vp diuers abuses offered vnto him, because it is agreeable both to the Lawes of god & our Cuntrye.'⁹³

If the theory of duelling and the concomitant rise of the rapier incited some Englishmen to defend the traditional English martial arts in general and knightly combats in particular, many others turned to the lawful combats of their indigenous past with similar intentions. The trial by combat had not been practised in Anglo-Saxon England, which had had a relatively advanced system of litigation due to strong central power and the Anglo-Saxons being less militant than the knights of the Continent.⁹⁴ This form of trial came to England with the Normans, who were particularly proud of their military habits. The common law accepted the trial by battle in two different cases: in the Court of the Common Pleas in real causes and in King's Bench for personal causes in murder, felony and treason. Although it remained a legal possibility in the common law courts until 1819, trial by combat had grown uncommon already in the thirteenth century and by the fourteenth century it had become practically obsolete.⁹⁵

The process survived or was revived, however, under the strong French influence of knightly customs by the establishment of the High Court of Chivalry in the middle of the fourteenth century. In the High Court of Chivalry, a civil law court presided over by the Lord High Constable and the Earl Marshal, the trial by combat was used for the trial of treason and homicide committed abroad as well as for a 'deed or action of arms'.⁹⁶ The trial by battle in the High Court of Chivalry was a highly formalised ritual of chivalry whose rules, bearing a close resemblance to Philip the Fair's rules in France, were drawn up by Richard II's uncle, Thomas of

⁹³ Ibid., p. 579.

⁹⁴ See e.g. Caenegem 1988, pp. 65–6; Bartlett 1986, p. 104. [Ranulf de Glanville], *The treatise on the laws and customs of the realm of England commonly called Glanvill*, ed. G. D. G. Hall (London, 1965), pp. 23–6, 173, 180–1.

⁹⁵ Bartlett 1986, ch. 6. BL, Add. MS 34729, fos. 85–8. For some twelfth-century examples, see e.g. Thomas Madox, *The history and antiquities of the Exchequer* (1769) (2 vols., New York, 1967), 1, pp. 97, 104, 372, 426, 451, 470.

⁹⁶ My discussion is mostly based on Neilson 1890, pp. 31–74, 147–206; Squibb 1959, chs. 1 and 2; Keen 1996, pp. 135–48; Hardacre 1957.

Woodstock, duke of Gloucester and the Lord High Constable.⁹⁷ These chivalric combats of the late Middle Ages (both in England and on the Continent), which were exclusively aristocratic, have rightly been seen as an intermediate stage between the judicial combat and the duel of honour. The combat was 'aristocratic but still judicial'.⁹⁸

It is important to note that by the end of the fifteenth century the High Court of Chivalry was inactive (and the office of Constable was left vacant after the execution of Edward, duke of Buckingham, in 1521), and it was restored only during James I's reign, although there were several heraldic cases in the late sixteenth century decided by the Earl Marshal. In 1622 the Earl Marshal was authorised alone to preside over the court.⁹⁹ In 1632 there was a complicated lawsuit between two Scots, David Ramsey and Lord Mackay, involving an accusation of treason committed abroad, and the High Court of Chivalry was about to stage a judicial combat. A platform had already been set up in Tuttle Fields, and the heralds were expected to make 'some thousands of pounds gaines' from the occasion. Yet, neither common lawyers nor the divines were satisfied. 'The Judges and Common lawyers say,' John Pory surmised, 'in case a combatt bee awarded, whosoever killes the other, is by their law guilty of murther.' The divines argued that 'it is a heathenish [act] to seek truth that waye, and that all duells and combats whatsoever are condemned by generall Councils'.¹⁰⁰ The fight was first adjourned then moved from Tuttle Fields to 'the Military yarde by St Giles, where none may be spectators but the Commissioners' themselves. In the end, the earl of Arundel as Earl Marshal declared that the king had finally determined that 'a combatt was not the certain way of finding out the truth' and the whole business was abandoned.¹⁰¹

These chivalric rituals were described in detail in Shakespeare's *Richard II* (composed in the mid 1590s) in the controversy between

⁹⁷ For the rules, see Travers Twiss ed., *The black book of the Admiralty* (London, 1871), I, pp. 300–29; S[elden], *The doello*, pp. 40–6; BL, Add. MS 35820. See also William Dugdale, *Origines juridicales, or historical memorials*, 3rd edn (London, 1680), pp. 76–86. Levack 1973, p. 130, points out that 'the laws of arms which the civilians upheld in the Court of Chivalry was an entirely indigenous creation and owed nothing to Continental influences'. See also Holdsworth 1922, I, pp. 573–80, 308–10.

⁹⁸ Bartlett 1986, pp. 125–6.

⁹⁹ For an example of a challenge to a knightly trial by combat in 1549 see *CSPD Addenda*, 1547–65, p. 401. For another example from Dublin in 1583 see PRO, SP 63/104 no. 69. I am grateful to Hiram Morgan for this reference.

¹⁰⁰ Powell 1977, pp. 215, 202, 229, 231, see also pp. 165, 177–8, 184, 186, 191, 197, 199–200, 205, 209, 213, 219, 243; [Bulstrode Whitelocke], *Memorials of the English affairs* (London, 1682), p. 16.

¹⁰¹ Powell 1977, pp. 243, 245, 261, 265–6.

Bullingbrook and Mowbray. The opening scene of the play recounts a traditional knightly trial by combat, described as 'the rites of knighthood' by Bullingbrook and a 'chivalrous design of knightly trial' by Mowbray.¹⁰² Bullingbrook accuses Mowbray of treason rather than of 'ancient malice' (which was another reason for the combat in the civilians' lists), as Shakespeare carefully points out, and is hence properly entitled to ask for the knightly field. Several times both Bullingbrook and Mowbray give each other the lie and state their willingness to prove their words by their swords. But when Richard does not grant the field Mowbray moves to the point of honour, arguing that honour is more valuable than life and that a combat is the only way of restoring his honour, tarnished by the charge of treason and lying. He first tells Richard that

My life thou shalt command, but not my shame:
The one my duty owes, but my fair name,
Despite of death that lives upon my grave,
To dark dishonor's use thou shalt not have.

And when Richard seems to be adamant Mowbray points out that

The purest treasure mortal times afford
Is spotless reputation; that away,
Men are but gilded loam or painted clay.
A jewel in a ten-times-barr'd-up chest
Is a bold spirit in a loyal breast.
Mine honour is my life, both grow in one,
Take honor from me, and my life is done.¹⁰³

It was precisely to these traditions of trial by combat that many English writers turned when they wanted to argue against the Italian private duel of honour. Above all, these traditions guided the Society of Antiquaries when they discussed 'the antiquity, use and ceremony of lawful combats in England' in May 1601.¹⁰⁴ Like their other discussions, the

¹⁰² *Richard II*, I, i, 75, 81. According to Holinshed, when Richard requested 'them to agree, and make peace together' Mowbray answered that 'it could not be so brought to passe, his honor saued', *Holinshed's chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (6 vols., London, 1807), II, p. 845. Samuel Daniel mentioned 'slaunder' but not honour; Samuel Daniel, *The civil wars*, ed. Laurence Michel (New Haven, 1958), I, 60-4.

¹⁰³ *Richard II*, I, i, 166-9, 177-83. In IV, i, there is of course another account of a trial by battle, which is almost completely devoid of any reference to honour. The term 'point of honour' is used V, iii, 11. It is not certain that the case between Hereford (i.e. Bullingbrook) and Norfolk (i.e. Mowbray) was a proceeding in the Court of Chivalry, for, as Squibb has pointed out, Norfolk was the Earl Marshal at the time, Squibb 1959, p. 23, n.1.

¹⁰⁴ For the Society of Antiquaries see Van Norden 1946; Van Norden 1949; Sharpe 1979, pp. 26-30; McKisack 1971; Schoeck 1954; Wagner 1967; Whigham 1985.

antiquaries' examination of 'lawful combats in England' was intended to provide a defence for their native traditions. In particular, it was an integral part of the defence of the common law against the strong influence of the civil law on the English legal system. From the early sixteenth century onwards many civil lawyers had condemned the English law as barbarous and had suggested improvements, taking the civil law as their model. For common lawyers these plans were symptoms of menacing development, which called for a defence. By 1600 Edward Coke, for instance, began to publish his reports, which were meant to defend the English legal system.¹⁰⁵

Many civil lawyers argued that a judicial trial by combat was barbaric and should be abolished. 'It is certaine & manifest', William Fulbecke noted, 'that priuate men, and people subiect, and inferiour princes, haue no such necessitie to make triall by battaile, because they may pursue their right by other lawfull meanes in some court of iustice.'¹⁰⁶ The validity of trial by combat was further undermined by the earl of Northampton, who had been trained in the civil law. According to him, it was 'most absurd' to assume that the combat could decide justice. 'No touch', he wrote in 1614, 'can bee more deceitfull in this triall then the Sword, since he that is most cleare doeth often perish.' God's judgements and purposes were 'inscrutable' and He would consequently 'not bee tied like mortall men to secondary meanes'.¹⁰⁷

Amongst the antiquaries, most of whom accepted trial by combat, there was one anonymous dissenting voice which perhaps belonged to a civil lawyer.¹⁰⁸ He gave several reason as to why trial by battle was against the divine law: it was to tempt God and 'the invention of the diuill'; it could be seen as a murder and was against charity and love. Trial by combat was also contrary to the law of nations, which always required that the offender must be punished and the innocent absolved – a requirement which trial by combat so blatantly failed to fulfil. It was completely 'absurd' that 'the defendant should bee forced to try his cause

¹⁰⁵ See Helgerson 1992, pp. 65–104.

¹⁰⁶ William Fulbecke, *The pandectes of the law of nations* (London, 1602), fo. 35^r. Cf., however, John Cowell, *The interpreter: or booke containing the signification of wordes* (Cambridge, 1607), sig. Q2^r.

¹⁰⁷ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 63–4. For Northampton's education see Peck 1991, and Peck 1982. Kevin Sharpe has suggested that Northampton gave 'official direction' to the antiquaries, Sharpe 1979, p. 26. This seems highly unlikely, given the fact that most of the antiquaries disagreed with Northampton over the legality of trial by combat.

¹⁰⁸ This paper is normally ascribed to John Davies. This cannot be the case, however, because its argument is diametrically opposed to the one put forward in Davies's literary output in general and in his paper on lawful combats in particular. Cf. McKisack 1971, pp. 158–9.

by force of armes, at the pleasure of his adversary, when he wanteth sufficient prooffe'.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, many antiquaries were quick to insist that the English law allowed various forms of single combat. In defending trial by combat they were upholding the common law against what they deemed to be an encroachment of the civil and canon law on the English indigenous heritage. Both James Whitelocke and John Davies were actively involved in this defence project on other occasions. Fifteen years later Davies, as the king's Attorney-General in Ireland, was to defend the common law as a *ius non scriptum*, arguing that it was 'the most perfect and most excellent and without comparison the best to make and preserve a commonwealth . . . far more apt and agreeable than the civil or canon law'.¹¹⁰

In the antiquaries' meeting Whitelocke, Davies and Joseph Holland, all common lawyers, depicted in detail the various cases when the English law accepted trial by battle. Whitelocke defined lawful combats as those 'which are tolerated in the common wealth for triall of causes which cannot be discussed by any evidence on either part', and went on to discuss the cases where English law permitted the combat, and to describe its ceremonies.¹¹¹ Holland claimed that the trial by combats had been in use 'long before the last conquest',¹¹² and Davies pointed out that 'we do admit and presuppose, that some combats are lawfull' and that 'the ancient custom of this realm . . . gave such allowance to this kind of triall'. Moreover, Davies assured that this custom had not been 'begunne and continewed without reason'. In the twelfth century the trial by combat 'was used allmoste in all actions reall and personall'. Rather than being 'a wilfull or voluntary act of the parties', a combat was, Davies emphasised, 'the act of the court, the act of lawe, and the act of justice'. It was in accordance with 'the very law of nature' that a man, being accused of 'any capitall crime, as treason, murder, or robbery' and having 'noe other prooffe to clear him', might 'deffend his life with his life'. Whereas trials by ordeal were indeed 'plaine trying

¹⁰⁹ [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity, use, and ceremony of lawfull combats in England' in Hearne ed., *A collection*, II, pp. 187–90.

¹¹⁰ John Davies, *Le premier report des cases . . . en Ireland* (1615), sig. *2^r–v, cited in Helgersson 1992, p. 87, see also pp. 86, 93–6.

¹¹¹ James Whitelocke, 'Of the antiquity and office of herald in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 190.

¹¹² Joseph Holland, 'Of the antiquity use and ceremony of lawful combats in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 196.

and tempting of God', 'in an equall combat that is fought without disadvantage, the strength, the spirits, and the powers of nature do decide the controversy'.¹¹³

There was some disagreement as to the way in which trial by combat had entered the common law. Whereas Holland claimed that it had already been practised before the Norman Conquest, both Davies and Arthur Agard argued that it had originated among the Goths and Vandals and that it had been brought to England by the Normans.¹¹⁴ They seemed content to admit a strong Norman influence on the common law and yet to laud it as their indigenous inheritance against the encroachment of foreign habits. Moreover, both Whitelocke and Davies confessed that the trial by battle was 'an argument of a warlike and valiant nation', which 'carryes with it a little taste of barbarism'. Nevertheless, it did not follow that the common law was an uncouth or unreasonable law. On the contrary, seeking to protect the excellency of the common law, Davies justified his position in the following manner: 'I thought it not impertinent for the honour of the law of England, which hath an excellent harmonie of reason in it, to shew uppon what reasons it gave allowance to the triall by combat'.¹¹⁵ In *The institutes of the laws of England*, Edward Coke also maintained that all forms of duel 'for private malice' were sternly prohibited. Yet, 'there is a duellum allowed by law depending a suit for the triall of truth'.¹¹⁶

In addition to these trials by combat in the common law courts, there were also 'martial' combats, as Agard called them. They were combats determined and organised by the High Court of Chivalry, or 'in the court of marshall and constable'.¹¹⁷ Whereas in common law courts a trial by combat could take place 'uppon appeales of murder or robbery, or for

¹¹³ John Davies, 'Of the antiquity, use, and ceremony of lawful combats in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 180–7, in pp. 180–1. See also Holland, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 194–7, especially p. 195.

¹¹⁴ Davies, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 180–1; Arthur Agard, 'Of the antiquity, use and ceremony of lawful combats in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 215–22, at p. 221.

¹¹⁵ Davies, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 181–2; Whitelocke, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 190–4. See also Robert Cotton, 'A discourse of the lawfullnes of combats to be performed in the presence of the king, or the constable and marshall of England', [1609], in Robert Cotton, *Cottoni post-huma*, ed. James Howell (London, 1651), p. 62.

¹¹⁶ Edward Coke, *The third part of the institutes of the laws of England* (London, 1644), pp. 157–9; Edward Coke, *The second part of the institutes of the laws of England* (London, 1642), pp. 247–8; [Edward Coke], 'A discourse touching the unlawfulness of private combats', in Gutch, *Collectanea curiosa*, I, pp. 9–12. See in general also Henry Finch, *Law, or, a discourse thereof, in foure bookes* (London, 1627), pp. 421–3.

¹¹⁷ Agard, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 218.

title of inheritance in a writ of right', in the High Court of Chivalry it was admitted 'uppon appeales of treason'.¹¹⁸ The same distinction was drawn by Coke. Having described the ways in which combats were used in common law courts, he pointed out that 'if the cause of appeale be not determinable by the Common Law, but before the Constable and the Marshall according to the Civill Law, there the Constable and Marshall are Iudges'.¹¹⁹ One antiquary went so far as to claim that this was the only lawful form of combat in England. It was, he told his colleagues, 'only the kings of England' who 'by their constables, and the marshal ordered and allowed all combats, and not the common lawyers', even if it was now redundant, because 'the office of constable and earl marshall have been neglected and unknown'.¹²⁰

Another antiquary, leaving common law trial by combats to 'our learned lawe antiquarians here present', also concentrated on knightly combats – on 'tilts, tournaments, barriers and such like'. In earlier times knights used 'sharp weapons' but nowadays 'these combats are exercised by the rebated weapons, with more delight in shew, then danger in acting'.¹²¹ Moreover, they always required an intensive royal supervision. Tournaments, that is to say, were allowed only by the prince's precepts; private jousts, although they could be fought 'for virtue's cause' and thus have beneficial features, were nevertheless unlawful. Three months after Essex's rebellion, the anonymous antiquary told his colleagues that tournaments 'were holden a certain kind of rebellion, because under colour of doing feats of arms, they made many assemblies of armed knights and gentlemen to conspire against the king, to revenge some quarrel, or to assist some other faction, whereby they disturbed and endangered the common wealth'.¹²²

At the same time as many antiquaries and common lawyers defended their native legal traditions against the foreign impact of the civil law, their discussions of 'lawful combats' were even more strongly directed against unlawful combats. It was first and foremost the private duel of honour which they unanimously condemned as an unlawful combat. One of the antiquaries sneered at 'such combats as are done for foolish defence, as

¹¹⁸ Davies, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 182.

¹¹⁹ Coke, *The second part*, pp. 247–8.

¹²⁰ [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity, use, and ceremony of lawful combats in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 213–14.

¹²¹ [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 203–4, 206. For his sources see Henric Bocer, *De ivre pugnæ, hoc est, belli & duelli tractatus methodicus* (Tübingen, 1591), pp. 153–4; Alciato, *De singulari certamine*, in *Opera omnia*, IV, cols. 530–2.

¹²² [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 206–7.

they term it, of their honour, when they are affected with verbal injury, as to fight for the lye and such like'. This was not to say that honour and credit were negligible. On the contrary, 'credit and good name' were as important as 'our life and living'. But it was utterly foolish 'to do it upon every wronged speech, especially where law or reason may determine' it. If men had constant recourse to the duel to solve their disagreements about honour, it would occasion 'daily murders and mischiefs', endanger the quiet of the commonwealth and undermine thus its whole basis.¹²³

Arthur Agard also argued that 'not every one that will stand upon his reputation of valour is to be presently admitted to prosecute his revenge by main force and dint of sword'.¹²⁴ Francis Tate exclaimed that 'manifestly unlawfull' combats were those 'which are entred into without authority of the Magistrate, or any form of law, as upon private quarrells; either unpremeditate, and in hot blood, or else upon cold, and grounded malice'.¹²⁵ James Whitelocke was even more precise in his fulmination against the private duel. 'Unlawful combats', he told the Society, 'are those that are fought by private men upon private quarrels arising upon poynts of honor or disgrace, as they term them.' There was one particular author, Whitelocke told his colleagues, who had written about these detestable fights. It was 'one Vincentis Serviolo' who had familiarised the English with these 'unlawful combats'. These combats were, in short, 'naturally revenges, and not trialls'.¹²⁶

Whereas Saviolo was only mentioned as a despicable writer spreading the abominable theory of the private duel and the point of honour, the antiquaries regarded some native treatises as the chief authorities upon knightly rituals. When an antiquary delineated knightly rituals in general and 'the manner of combat here in England of the marshal's court' in particular, he referred his colleagues to 'the Glory of generosity, written by Mr. Fern', to 'the Honor of arms, written by Mr. Thomas Beddingfield' as well as to 'the histories of our own nation'. Especially John Ferne's *The blazon of gentrie* had 'so liberally discoursed' this topic that 'he seemeth to have left nothing for any other to handle'.¹²⁷ The anonymous antiquary

¹²³ [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 209–10.

¹²⁴ Agard, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 215.

¹²⁵ Francis Tate, 'The antiquity, use, and ceremonies of lawfull combats in England', in Gutch, *Collectanea curiosa*, I, pp. 6–9, in p. 7.

¹²⁶ Whitelocke, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, 190–4, at p. 190. See also [anon.], 'Of the antiquity', Hearne, *A collection*, II, p. 202, where the argument is directed against 'the challenges of masters of fence'.

¹²⁷ [Anon.], 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 210–11. This antiquary was perhaps a herald, but obviously not a common lawyer because he left common law trial by combat to 'our learned lawe antiquarians here present'.

was not wide of the mark, for the combats in the High Court of Chivalry were indeed discussed in Ferne's treatise and in the anonymous *Booke of honor and armes*; and, had the antiquaries' meeting been held a year later, William Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill*, published in 1602, could have been added to the list.

It is striking that, whereas most modern commentators have seen Ferne's treatise, *The booke of honor and armes* and Segar's volume as exponents of the private duel of honour,¹²⁸ their contemporaries saw their enterprise in a rather different light. For their contemporaries, instead of examining the private duel of honour, Ferne and Segar were authorities in chivalric rituals, depicting in detail the lawful combats of their indigenous tradition. The distinction between the duel of honour and the native chivalric combats which has become blurred in modern scholarship was still discerned in the early eighteenth century. In 1720 an anti-duelling writer pointed out that Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill* 'and other Heraldical authors' were irrelevant because 'most of it relates to *Judicial Duels*' which was 'not altogether to the purpose' of the duel of honour.¹²⁹

The task of offering an account and defence of the High Court of Chivalry befitted Ferne and Segar exceptionally well, for both of them were of course heralds, who were closely linked with, though technically not members of, the High Court of Chivalry. Ferne wrote that it was the herald's duty 'to register and matriculate the auntient actes of honor, and the merits of Gentlemen'; he must have thorough knowledge of all the chivalric ceremonies from the dubbing of knights to 'roiall progresses, princely mariages and christnings'. It was incumbent on heralds 'to be present as Iudges, to assist their Earle Marshall at triumphs of peace, as Turneaments, Iusts, Barriers, & swordplaies' and 'to marshall the solemnities of moornings, and funerals of the noble'. Moreover, 'he must be present . . . at all combates betweene Gentlemen, gaging of single battaile, challenges, and encounters'.¹³⁰ The heralds were, in brief, professional exponents of the chivalric code.¹³¹

Ferne was not interested at all in the private duel of honour but rather in the various forms of trial by combat. He pointed out that trial by combat had been well known in England both in King's Bench and in

¹²⁸ E.g. Shapin 1994, pp. 109–10. ¹²⁹ Finet, *A letter*, sigs. [ar^r–3^v].

¹³⁰ Ferne, *The blazon of gentrie*, pt 1, pp. 151–2; John Doddridge, 'A consideration of the office and duty of the heralds in England', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 163–7, at p. 164. See in general McCoy 1989, p. 32; Whitelocke, 'Of the antiquity', in Hearne, *A collection*, I, p. 56.

¹³¹ See in general Wagner 1967; Day 1990; Hardacre 1957.

the Court of Common Pleas.¹³² More importantly, he proceeded 'to a breefe declaration of the nature of battaile, or single combate, according to the lawes of Armes, and in what cases the defyance of that combate may be giuen'.¹³³ In England the number of these cases had been severely circumscribed by 'a Statute enacted in the dayes of King Richard the second'. According to this statute, the Constable and the Marshal – 'competent iudges of Battaile and Combate', as Ferne pointed out – had power to hear and determine all cases 'touching warres, and feates of Armes', which could not be determined by the common law. These included 'all contracts, things, and businesses, touching warres, and feates of Armes, arising out of the Realme: and within the Realme, causes and quarrels, that concerne Armes, and the warres'. Ferne asserted that if 'the honor of Gentlemen, and the integritie of their coate-armors (which ought to be no lesse deere vnto them, then their owne liues) should be impugned, or obscured by iniuries', the Earl Marshal could give gentlemen a licence for combat.¹³⁴ His account was thus an account of trial by combat in the High Court of Chivalry.

Both the author of *The booke of honor and armes* and Segar in the *Honor military, and ciuill* did not focus on the High Court of Chivalry as Ferne had done but treated other forms of knightly rituals. The author of *The booke of honor and armes* followed Muzio in his definition of combat as 'a single fight of one man against another for trial of truth', and dated its beginning to the state duels of classical antiquity.¹³⁵ Another source for single combats came from Langobards who first had used 'these particular fights', as the author put it.¹³⁶ He asserted in the preface to the reader that 'who so is either in deede or opinion, perswaded to haue truth and reason on his side, doth not onlie constantlie beleue that so it is, but also being thereof denied, holdeth himselfe iniured, and consequently burthened'. Moreover, 'the lawes of all Nations' had permitted 'that such questions as cold not bee ciuillie prooued by confession, witnesse, or other circumstances, should receiue iudgement by fight and Combat, supposing that GOD . . . would giue victorie to him that iustlie aduentured his life, for truth, Honor, and Iustice'.¹³⁷

Segar began his account by acknowledging that both the civil and canon law prohibited single combats. Nevertheless, since the 'law of

¹³² Ferne, *The blazon of gentrie*, pt 1, pp. 308–9. ¹³³ *Ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 309–10.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pt 1, pp. 311–12.

¹³⁵ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 53–5; Girolamo Muzio, *Il duello*, (1550) (Venice, 1553), fo. 8^v.

¹³⁶ [Anon.], *The booke of honor*, pp. 1–2. ¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, sig. A2^{r-v}.

Nations' and 'vse and ancient custome' allowed combats, they should be accepted. Segar presented both the laws of 'the olde Lombards' and 'a constitution of King Philip the Faire' as his examples.¹³⁸ For him, combats were trials; small inequalities between combatants were negligible because in a combat 'God is iudge'.¹³⁹ His whole discussion was cast in a mode of antiquarianism. Whereas the private duel of honour was seen by many as a recent import from Italy, Segar wanted above all to expound ancient English customs. 'Let vs', he reminded his readers, 'remember what order was anciently obserued when one Gentleman or souldier happened to challenge another.'¹⁴⁰ More importantly, Segar examined both tournaments and jousts ('when the challenge or Combat is for honour onely, loue of Ladies, or exercise of Armes') and trial by battle ('in a challenge for life and death').¹⁴¹ He further described the organisation of the ancient trial by combat in England and discussed at length the history of triumphs and various tournament ceremonies (including John Tiptoft's rules for tournaments, revised in 1562). He rounded off his whole work with an exposition of the main occasions of Elizabethan chivalry, including the Accession Day Tilts.¹⁴²

Ferne, the author of *The booke of honor and armes* and Segar were thus not primarily interested in the theory of the private duel of honour at all. Of course, they freely culled their accounts partly from Italian sources. But in many ways they were closer to the critics of the duelling theory than to its Italianate exponents. *The booke of honor and armes* and Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill* mainly examined various aspects of their indigenous knightly traditions. The ultimate aim of Ferne's whole discussion of single combats was to offer an account and a defence of the High Court of Chivalry.

The heralds' accounts of knightly rituals have often been explained by a reference to the Elizabethan chivalric revival. Whilst there is little doubt that this was the case, we can now see that they were also in part indigenous responses to the Italian Renaissance theory of the private duel of honour. This is readily obvious from the fact that the appearance of these discussions of single combats in heraldic literature correlated almost exactly with the dissemination of the Italian theory of duelling in England. Single combats had hardly impinged at all on earlier heraldic literature. In his *Workes of armorie* (1572), for instance, John Bossewell was content to describe nobility and chivalry in terms of cardinal virtues

¹³⁸ Segar, *Honor military*, pp. 116–17. ¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117–18.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121. ¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–31.

¹⁴² For later accounts see André Favyn, *The theater of honour and knight-hood*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1623), pp. 422–60.

before moving to his proper topic of arms. His only reference to single combats appeared in his treatment of the 'vices, whiche are repugnant to Generositie'.¹⁴³ Writing a decade earlier, Gerald Legh had this to say about knightly combats: in 'the challenge of combate' the vanquished knight lost his coat of arms but it was erroneous to suppose that the vanquisher could bear it.¹⁴⁴

'A KINGLY LIBERTY'

Given that public defences of duelling not only were frequent, but often admitted that duelling jeopardised the principles of Christianity and the king's legitimate authority, it should come as no surprise that those who argued against duelling condemned it on precisely these grounds. The tone was set by the opening words of the proclamation against the reports of duels: 'Because among other bitter fruits that these unlawfull and bewitching Duels have produced; there is none more dangerous for the sequell, more contemptuous against Our Authoritie, and more godlesse against the Divine Majestie, then is the publication, as it were before the Sunne and Moone, of mens arrogant conceits of their owne valour.'¹⁴⁵ Many theologians harped on the idea that the duel was mere tempting of God, or that revenge belonged only to God.¹⁴⁶ When Abraham Gibson was preaching to 'the Captaines and Gentlemen' in the Artillery Garden in London in April 1618, he, as so many other preachers at the time, was preparing his listeners for a war. To wage a war was justified when it was 'grounded either on religion to God or loyaltie to our Prince'. Gibson contrasted this to 'Duellists, whose combates haue no iust ground or warrant'. In a duel man hazarded both his body and soul, because he was fighting not only against his enemy but also against God.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, the puritan divine William Gouge believed that duels incurred God's inscrutable wrath; God could give 'the challenger into his aduersaries hand, because he hath vndertaken so indirect a course'.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ John Bosswell, *Workes of armorie, deuuyd into three bookes* (n.p., 1572), fo. 9^r; Ferne, *The blazon of gentrie*, pt 1, p. 97.

¹⁴⁴ [Gerald Legh], *The accedens of armory* (London, 1562), fos. 26^v–27^r. See also William Wyrley, *The true vse of armorie* (London, 1592).

¹⁴⁵ *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 295.

¹⁴⁶ E.g. Bertrand de Loque [François de Saillans], *Discourses on warre, and single combat*, trans. John Eliot (1591) (London, 1631), pp. 47, 55; William Wiseman, *The Christian knight* (London, 1619), sigs. R3^r, P4^r.

¹⁴⁷ Abraham Gibson, *Christiana-polemica, or a preparative to warre* (London, 1619), pp. 23–4.

¹⁴⁸ Gouge, *Of domesticall duties*, pp. 417–18. I am grateful to Anuleena Kimanen for this reference.

William Ames, another puritan divine, pointed out in his treatise on the cases of conscience that it was a forlorn hope to find support for the duel from the Bible: 'The Lawes of duelling (as also of drinking) were never of Gods writing, but of the Divels tradition for the ruine of Mankind.'¹⁴⁹ William Perkins, yet another puritan, asserted that 'there is no warrant in Gods word, for a priuate man to accept a chalenge. Nay, it is rather flat against the word. For God saies, Reuenge is mine.'¹⁵⁰ The earl of Northampton, a Catholic, agreed. He was horrified by the duellists' hypocrisy. Just before entering their fight which 'Gods holy Lawes abhorre', these people 'fall downe humbly vpon their knees, and protest earnestly to God, that desire to defend Honor'.¹⁵¹

Although God's authority was often brought to bear directly on duelling, the critics of duelling were also clearly aware of the limitations of religious arguments against duelling. God's word and the gentleman's sword were not necessary compatible, and the arguments of the former could be irrelevant in relation to the latter. When William Wiseman mentioned that the duel was 'offensiue to God' he also pointed out that he was going 'to leaue the Scriptures, and Church lawes; because they be not altogether our profession, and the word, and the sword seeme contraries'.¹⁵²

It was in fact much more common to invoke religion and God's authority only indirectly. It was mainly summoned in connection with temporal authority. The duel, it was argued, was against legitimate temporal authority in general and often against its explicit commands in particular. It was therefore misleading to appeal to the combat between David and Goliath. The crucial difference between this combat and a private duel was the blessing of temporal authority. Thus Ames pointed out that this biblical combat had 'no correspondence to a private duell', because it was 'of a singular motion of the Holy Ghost', and undertaken 'with publike authority'. And Wiseman gave the same biblical story as an example of a single combat which was lawful because it occurred 'in iust warre' and was 'commanded by the *Prince*, or common-weale'.¹⁵³ Thomas Palmer similarly opened his sermon to the militia men in Bristol in 1635 by reminding them of the fact that 'this Duell was performed not in private, but a pitched field: not in the time of peace, but in the action of warre'.

¹⁴⁹ Ames, *Conscience*, bk v, pp. 182–4; Ames, *The marrow*, p. 268.

¹⁵⁰ Perkins, *The whole treatise*, pp. 501–4.

¹⁵¹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 62.

¹⁵² Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. Q1^v.

¹⁵³ Ames, *Conscience*, bk v, p. 183; Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. N4^r; see also Loque, *Discourses*, pp. 50–1.

Strictly speaking, it was not 'a single Combat' at all, but rather 'a generall Battell'.¹⁵⁴

The duel was seen as a direct opposite to one of the most obvious commonplaces of the age – to the idea that temporal authority in general and monarchical authority in particular was sanctified by divine commandment. The duel, as George Gifford put it in 1597, 'plucketh the sworde out of the hande of the Prince, who is the minister of GOD to take vengeance vppon the euill doers'.¹⁵⁵ 'Duellers', John Syme argued, were nothing but 'lawlesse contemnners of authority'; indeed 'by usurpation they make themselves Kings'. And many others concurred.¹⁵⁶ The duellist was taking unto himself 'a kingly liberty', as Raleigh put it,¹⁵⁷ or making himself 'King', as George Chapman wrote in *Bussy D'Ambois*.¹⁵⁸

Duels also betrayed the basic principles which guided Northampton's political thought. According to him, the king looked after the wellbeing of the whole community, and the subject bided quiet at home simply expecting the wellbeing to radiate from above. Yet, an opinion had spread over all the kingdom, that 'a certaine freedome left to all men vpon earth by Nature as their *Birth-right*, to defend their reputations with their swords'.¹⁵⁹ For Northampton, this was nothing short of complete nonsense. Private persons, he asserted, had been 'borne not to command but to obey, not to struggle but to submit'.¹⁶⁰ If 'priuate persons . . . vnweighed by liberty' were allowed to use their own discretion, the consequences could be fatal to the kingdom.¹⁶¹ Because the king acknowledged 'no Superiour but God only', he had neither to give 'speciall reasons' for his commandments nor to ask 'voices' or advice of his subjects.¹⁶² It was obvious that duelling was a direct challenge to these absolutist principles. In taking up duelling subjects were turning this order upside down; they were, as Northampton put it, transgressing wilfully 'against the State of a King'.¹⁶³ 'These disgracefull actes' of insults were hurtful both to the person involved and 'to the State it selfe'.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Palmer, *Bristolls military garden. A sermon* (London, 1635), p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ George Gifford, *A treatise of true fortitude* (London, 1594), sigs. D3^v–4^r.

¹⁵⁶ Syme, *Lifes preservative*, pp. 114–15. See also e.g. Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. Q1^v; Thomas Barnes, *Vox belli, or, an alarm to warre* (London, 1626), p. 22.

¹⁵⁷ Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, iv, p. 458.

¹⁵⁸ *Bussy D'Ambois*, II, i, 197–9, cited in Smuts 1999, p. 15.

¹⁵⁹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 2–3, 5, 8. For Northampton's views of the subject's passive role see also Peltonen 1995, pp. 222–3, 225.

¹⁶¹ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 30–1. ¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8. ¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52–3, 33, 58.

Francis Bacon distinguished between 'free estates' and 'a Monarchy'. Whereas in the former it would have been easy to think that 'perticuler persons should haue righted themselues', this was not the case in monarchies.¹⁶⁵ There duels were a highway to rebellion. 'It may grow', Bacon declared, 'from quarrells, to banding, and from banding to trooping, and so to tumulte and commotion, from perticuler persons to dissention of families and aliances, yea to nationall quarrells.' 'The State', he continued, 'shal be like to a distempered, and vnperfect body, continually subiect to inflamations and convulsions.'¹⁶⁶

For many a critic there was an unbridgeable gap between the law and the duel. Far from being the duty of private persons, revenge belonged exclusively to the law. Lodovick Bryskett wrote that the law provides much 'more glorious reuenge' than a challenge'.¹⁶⁷ 'The law of England', another writer argued, 'forbiddeth any man to use any private revenge.'¹⁶⁸ According to Bacon, duelling not merely 'extorted reuenge out of the Magistrates hand', it further made 'priuate men to bee lawe-giuers to themselues' and thus 'plainely giues the law an affront'.¹⁶⁹ In 1616 he repeated that duelling 'is a direct affront of law and tends to the dissolution of magistracy'.¹⁷⁰

The theory of the point of honour was thus opposed to the law. The duellists were either ignoring the law or replacing it by their own disgusted principles. Raleigh wrote that, in addition to 'the point of religion', 'the point of law is directly contrary and opposite to that which they call the point of honour'.¹⁷¹ Bacon concurred, noting that according to the duellists there were two different laws – 'one a kind of *Gownelaw*, and the other a law of *reputation*'. If duelling was allowed, the lawbooks must be changed accordingly. Bacon sneered at the theory of the point of honour: 'the year books and statute books must giue place to some French and Italian pamphlets, which handle the doctrine of *Duells*'. But, Bacon went on, one could hardly stop there. If the theory of the point of honour was given precedence before the common law, the latter should be abolished and the public be informed about the drastic change, 'and not keepe

¹⁶⁵ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 22. Cf. *Stuart royal proclamation*, I, p. 307, where it was stated that 'doth it not appeare by Recorde, or Historie, that any one Kingdome, State of Peeres, or Democratic, since the beginning of the World till this day, did ever make good or avow the lawfulnessse of those attempts'.

¹⁶⁶ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 9; see also *Letters*, VI, p. 110. Cf. Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 73, where duels were compared with civil wars.

¹⁶⁷ Bryskett, *A discourse*, pp. 78–9. ¹⁶⁸ Coke[?], 'A discourse', p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 40. ¹⁷⁰ Bacon, *Letters*, VI, pp. 108–9.

¹⁷¹ Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, IV, p. 461.

the people in conflict and distraction betweene two lawes'.¹⁷² Another critic noted that if duelling were accepted, 'let us then pull Littletons quote over his eyes'; the Inns of Court could be turned into 'fencing schooles', because there would be 'no more assises'. All the questions of justice could then easily be solved: 'let us resolve first, who is the strongest man in a countrey' and whatever he happens to say 'must be so'.¹⁷³

The fact that the monarch did not seem to take decisive action against duels or was conniving at them was, as we have seen, sometimes taken as an index of his approval. Many originally French anti-duelling treatises expressed thinly veiled criticism of the monarch's unwillingness to play his role in suppressing duelling in earnest. They displayed, in other words, their impatience with Henry IV's contradictory policies. Pierre Matthieu could pay a compliment to Henry's 'exact and perfect obseruation' to his edict, but La Noue argued that as soon as the king 'beginneth in earnest to set hand to the worke', his subjects will follow him.¹⁷⁴ The whole point of Chevalier's tract was precisely to tell the king that it was no 'marke of Soueraigntie to giue Pardons', as some people had claimed.¹⁷⁵

James I was clearly aware of this kind of criticism. The treatise published to accompany his anti-duelling proclamation lamented the fact that Henry IV's bountiful granting of pardons for duellists had acted as 'a great cause of encouraging animositie'. 'For what crime', the treatise posed a rhetorical question, 'dare not men in passion attempt or vndertake, while Iustice sleepes, and Princes wincke.' James knew well that in England there were 'those seruants of Ours' who gave 'Pardons oftentimes vnder the pretext of *Man slaughter* to be signed by Our hand'. But the English monarch, so the treatise assured the reader, wanted to distance himself from these judges as well as from the French king's counterproductive policy. 'We do likewise', Northampton wrote in the king's name, 'protest and promise vpon the word of a King, That we wil neuer by the strength and vertue of Our *Royal prerogatiue*, graunt to any such offender, any pardon for his life, or any Lease for life, nor any other kind of grace or fauour.'¹⁷⁶

Dedicating the *Duel-ease* to Charles I in 1635, the anonymous author, on the one hand, reminded the king that 'Your regall beames of piety most advisedly reflected, that all quarrels are not to bee decided by the

¹⁷² Bacon, *The charge*, p. 10. ¹⁷³ G. F., *Duell-ease*, pp. 9, 11–12.

¹⁷⁴ Matthieu, *The heroyck life*, sig. Rr3^v; La Noue, *The politicke*, p. 165.

¹⁷⁵ Chevalier, *The ghosts*, pp. 20–1, 5; Loque, *Discourses*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁶ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 67–71, 79.

sword, nor every difference to make its full point at Tyburne.' But he also reminded Charles about his father's proclamations against duelling, expressing his fervent hope that 'your Maiesty will renew and endow them with a double vigour: penalties may bee put up upon such as provoke duels, and a way layed open to an easie redresse of wrongs by whomsoever offered'.¹⁷⁷ The implication was of course that the lack of resoluteness had put paid to James's attempt to eliminate duelling.

Bacon and Northampton, who were most closely involved in the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, discussed in detail the ways in which duellists should be punished. Their main concern was to provide a system of punishment which would be effective in restraining future duels rather than merely vindictive in its severity. As Bacon pointed out, the capital punishment issued in France was of no effect, because it was precisely what the duellist despised. Great severity did not mean great efficacy. Instead Bacon proposed 'farre greater lenity' than the French system and yet promised that this would also provide maximum efficiency.¹⁷⁸

Both Bacon and Northampton suggested penalties which were specifically geared to nobles and gentlemen. Proposing a proclamation against duelling in the autumn 1613, Bacon suggested that since duelling 'hath vogue only amongst noble persons, or persons of quality', the most efficient punishment would be a perpetual banishment from the court. 'I consider also', he wrote, 'that the greatest honour for subjects of quality in a lawful monarchy, is to have access and approach to their sovereign's sight and person, which is the fountain of honour; and though this be a comfort all persons of quality do not use; yet there is no good spirit but will think himself in darkness, if he be debarred of it.'¹⁷⁹

Northampton found Bacon's proposal too harsh. The duellists should be suspended for seven years 'not onely from Our Court' but also 'from Our presence, as from the Court, all Offices, all personall Attendances, and the discharges of all dueties, that belong either to Our *Person*, or the seruice of Our Court'. Moreover, some economic punishments were also appropriate. To be sure, 'We purpose not to depriue any of Our Seruants . . . of the Fees or Pensions, which they receiue by warrant of Our *Broad Seale*'. But it was the purpose to call 'backe all Graunts, depending meereley on Our pleasure'. It was also futile to expect any other favours from the royal bounty. The king would 'neuer vse or imploy any Gentlemen, &c. in Peace or Warre, at home or abroad, directly or

¹⁷⁷ G. F., *Duel-ease*, sig. B1^r.

¹⁷⁸ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 18–19; [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 33–9.

¹⁷⁹ Bacon, *Letters*, iv, p. 397; Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 17–19, 31–3, 44.

indirectly in Our Affaires'; he would 'neuer bestow on them the least fruit or effect of Our Grace and fauour, in Land, Lease, Pension, or by Letters commendatorie'. The king would further deprive these gentlemen of the mark of their gentility. They would be disentitled 'to weare swords and daggers' – a liberty 'which all Gentlemen enioy in the nature of a birth-right'. And the bishops, Northampton revealed, were about to publish 'a generall Excommunication' against all duellists, to boot.¹⁸⁰

If Northampton and Bacon disagreed about the suitable punishments for duellists, they were even more at variance on the ways in which those who went abroad to fight a duel should be punished. Northampton argued that the court of 'a *Constable and Marshall of England*' should be appointed to hear these cases. The obvious rationale underlying this plan was the fact that the High Court of Chivalry handled homicide committed abroad.¹⁸¹

Bacon disagreed. There was no need to have a recourse to the civil law court of the Earl Marshal. Although 'this Giant' of duelling, he told Star Chamber, 'bestrideth the sea, . . . I would take and snare him by the foote on this side'. Since Bacon placed great emphasis on punishing the preparations of duels, it made sense to argue that the actual crime in fact took place in England. 'The combination and plotting', he said, 'is on this side though it should be acted beyond sea.'¹⁸²

'CIVILIZED WITH DEATH'

Many critics of duelling dwelt on the flagrant contradiction between duelling on the one hand and religion, the law and the monarch on the other, but most of them understood at the same time that these were not entirely convincing arguments. Since the duelling theory discarded Christian principles and the monarch's lawful authority, it was not, they acknowledged, a cogent counterargument simply to reassert these claims. The critics insisted that the advocates of duelling had to be met on their own ground. In this way they felt able to discredit the entire theory underlying duelling. As François de La Noue noted, duelling was 'curable, if we will begin our cure rather by the causes than by the accidents'.¹⁸³ This was precisely why William Wiseman put religious arguments aside. They were not pertinent to the duelling theory; 'the word, and the sword', as he said, 'seeme contraries'.¹⁸⁴ This was also why Bacon remarked in Star

¹⁸⁰ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 85–94. ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 97–101.

¹⁸² Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 33–4. ¹⁸³ La Noue, *The politicke*, p. 165.

¹⁸⁴ Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. P1^v.

Chamber, 'that we have not to doe, in this case, so much with perticuler persons, as with vnfound and depraued opinions, like the dominations and spirits of the ayre, which the Scripture speaketh of'.¹⁸⁵

The first and perhaps the most obvious qualm expressed by the opponents of duelling was about the notion of honour and valour inherent in the duelling code. The duellists, the critics insisted, upheld a perverted concept of honour. Hunting 'after a phantasticall glorie' or 'a false honor' was La Noue's main explanation for duelling; and Thomas Nashe and Lodovick Bryskett, Arthur Warwick and William Ames concurred.¹⁸⁶ Bacon repeatedly argued that the most important cause of duelling was 'a false and erroneous imagination of honour and credit', 'a false conceipt of honour', a 'fond and false disguise or puppetrey of honor'. What made this false notion particularly dangerous, he emphasised, was its powerful nature: 'it imposeth a necessity vpon men of value to conforme them-selues; or else there is no liuing or looking vpon mens faces'.¹⁸⁷

The duellists, as we have seen, embraced a horizontal and reflexive notion of honour. The critics met this argument head-on, flatly denying that this was the true concept of honour. Pierre de La Primaudaye maintained that it was a recent phenomenon to have 'our honor tied to the vaine opinion of the world'.¹⁸⁸ According to William Ames, vain honour depended on 'the opinion of vaine men'.¹⁸⁹ Instead of a horizontal notion of honour, the critics of duelling emphasised that true honour was vertical in character. They argued that far from being merely based on other people's opinions, honour was a reward of virtues and virtuous actions. This was the opinion of La Primaudaye, La Noue as well as Chevalier.¹⁹⁰ Bryskett insisted that honour was 'the due reward of vertue',¹⁹¹ and Raleigh declared that it was nothing but 'a kind of his-tory, or fame following actions of vertue'.¹⁹² According to Bacon, honour

¹⁸⁵ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ La Noue, *The politicke*, pp. 163-4; Nashe, *The works*, II, p. 109; Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 215; Arthur Warwick, *Spare-minutes; or, resolved meditations and premeditated resolutions*, 2nd edn (London, 1634), sig. H10^r; Ames, *Conscience*, bk v, p. 179. See also G. F., *Dvell-ease*, sig. A4^{r-v}.

¹⁸⁷ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 11, 17, 34, 41, 12-13; Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. Q4^v.

¹⁸⁸ Pierre de La Primaudaye, *The French academie*, transl. T. B. (London, 1586), p. 385; Loque, *Discourses*, p. 63, in general pp. 58-64.

¹⁸⁹ Ames, *Conscience*, bk v, p. 179. Cf. Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 76; [anon.], *The treasure of tranquillity. Or a manvall of morall discourses, tending to the tranquillity of minde*, transl. James Maxwell (London, 1611), pp. 125-6.

¹⁹⁰ La Primaudaye, *The French academie*, p. 385; La Noue, *The politicke*, p. 164; Chevalier, *The ghosts*, pp. 27, 143-4.

¹⁹¹ Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 224. See also Joseph Hall, *Characters of vertues and vices: in two bookes* (London, 1608), p. 51.

¹⁹² Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, IV, p. 463.

was simply a reward for virtues and virtuous actions.¹⁹³ The proper goal for a man's life was therefore to perform 'great and lofty services to the commonwealth', and to seek thereby 'immortality by merit and renown'.¹⁹⁴ Bacon's, like the other critics', notion of honour was thus vertical (or positive) in character.¹⁹⁵ 'The winning of Honour is but the revealing of a man's virtue and worth without disadvantage', as Bacon put it in the opening words of his essay 'Of honour and reputation'.¹⁹⁶ The sharp contrast between fighting a private duel and fighting in defence of one's *patria* was endlessly presented.¹⁹⁷ And even if the *patria* was not in war, one critic asserted, 'you may finde your selfe warre-like worke', by bringing 'in new found lands, to enlarge your kings kingdomes'.¹⁹⁸

More importantly, as well as denying the horizontal character of honour, the critics also castigated the idea that honour was reflexive in character. They rejected the idea that a challenge constituted the best means of asserting one's valour and fortitude, and thus of maintaining one's status as a gentleman. An insult did not compromise one's honour. Honour depended on one's virtues, and because an insult in no way affected one's virtuous character, neither did it affect one's honour. La Primaudaye insisted that the recent prevalent but extremely fallacious notion of honour deemed 'those men as cowards and base-minded, that haue but once put vp the least iniurie offered by another'. And conversely, the opinion of the world deemed 'noble and courageous' those who could 'kill their enemies'.¹⁹⁹ In Nicholas Breton's *The court and the country*, the countryman argued that 'true valour' was 'not to stand vpon puntos, not to endure a lye without death, challenge for a frowne, and kill for a fowle word'.²⁰⁰ It was a cardinal error, wrote Thomas Barnes, to claim that 'hee is a base gull, no rightly valorous, nor magnanimous Gentleman, that will pocket up the least injury, and not prosecute it to the very drawing of blood from him that offers it'.²⁰¹ Bacon maintained that men in

¹⁹³ See e.g. Francis Bacon, *The essays or counsels: civill and morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford, 1985), pp. 159, 163–5.

¹⁹⁴ Francis Bacon, *The works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ethis and Douglas Denon Heath (7 vols., London, 1857–9), vi, p. 722.

¹⁹⁵ Stewart 1994, pp. 59–61. ¹⁹⁶ Bacon, *The essays*, p. 163.

¹⁹⁷ Gifford, *A treatise*, sig. D4^v; Norden, *The mirror*, pp. 21, 25; Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 87; Hall, *Characters*, p. 36; Stafford, *Staffords Niobe*, pp. 30–1; Stafford, *Honour and vertue*, pp. 57–8; Sylvester, *The parliament*, pp. 10–11; Chevalier, *The ghosts*, pp. 55, 69, 78, 143; Thomas Nashe, *Qvaternio or a fovrefold way to a happie life* (London, 1633), pp. 144–5.

¹⁹⁸ G. F., *Duel-ease*, p. 40.

¹⁹⁹ La Primaudaye, *The French academie*, p. 385. See also La Noue, *The politicke*, pp. 163–4.

²⁰⁰ Breton, *The court and the country*, sig. C3^{r–v}. See also e.g. Bryskett, *A discourse*, p. 215; Barclay, *The mirror*, pp. 93–4; Gifford, *A treatise*, sig. D3^{r–v}. See also e.g. Norden, *The mirror of honor*, p. 26.

²⁰¹ Barnes, *Vox belli*, p. 22; see also Loque, *Discourses*, p. 58; Ames, *Conscience*, bk v, p. 179.

general and duellists in particular 'have almost lost the true notion and understanding of *Fortitude* and *Valour*'.²⁰² A gentleman was not expected to demonstrate his courage unless the cause was both just and worthy. True fortitude, Bacon argued, 'setteth a better price vpon mens lives then to bestow them idly'. 'A man's life', he went on in a memorable passage, 'is not to bee tryfled away, it is to bee offered vp and sacrificed to honorable seruices, publike merites, good causes, and noble aduentures'.²⁰³ Duelling was thus based on a doubly perverted notion of honour and valour. True honour was neither reflexive nor horizontal. It was instead vertical.

The critics of duelling not merely castigated the notion of honour inherent in duelling and civil courtesy. Most importantly of all they questioned the entire theory of civil courtesy. They were convinced that these novel and dangerous notions were not home-bred. Rather, they were recent imports from the Continent. To condemn everything foreign in general and everything Italian in particular was of course a well-known cultural topos.²⁰⁴ But just at the time when the theory of civil courtesy and duelling began to infiltrate into England a particular anti-Italianism erupted. This was partly provoked by political developments both in England and abroad, and was thus concerned with religious and political attitudes, but the Italian manners, courtesies and refinements also provoked scathing attacks.²⁰⁵ Roger Ascham, who was among the first to castigate Italian manners, noted in 1564 that England had received from Italy 'plentie of new mischieues' and 'for maners, varietie of vanities, and chaunge of filthy liuing'. These would 'marre mens manners in England', mostly 'by preceptes of fonde bookes, of late translated out of Italian into English, sold in euery shop in London, commended by honest titles the soner to corrupt honest maners'.²⁰⁶ Ascham then rejected the world of Castiglione, although he approved him by name.²⁰⁷ Barnaby Rich castigated hypocritical courtiers who were obsequiously imitating foreign customs.²⁰⁸ In Haly Heron's analysis 'the last branche of Humilitie' consisted of 'outwardly shewing the fruites of vertues' and thus humbling 'it selfe in the face of all men'. This was commonly called 'Humanitie' although 'it nowe taketh the name of courtesie'. But this renaming also

²⁰² Bacon, *The charge*, p. 13.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–14; G. F., *Dwell-ease*, sig. C1^r. For a parody see [anon.], *A banquet of ieaests* (London, 1630), pp. 111–12.

²⁰⁴ See e.g. Einstein 1903, pp. 155–75.

²⁰⁵ Parks 1961; Parks 1962; Parks 1968; Javitch 1971 a, p. 123; Haynes 1977.

²⁰⁶ Cited in Whigham 1984, pp. 177–8. ²⁰⁷ See e.g. *ibid.*, pp. 181–2; Javitch 1978, p. 122.

²⁰⁸ Barnaby Rich, *Allarme to England* (London, 1578), sigs. Gi^r–ii^r.

entailed redescription, 'in so much, as some call it a bastarde courtesie, or in playne tearmes, dissemblyng flatterie, that couertly taketh possession of mens myndes, in the Courtes of Princes nowe adayes'.²⁰⁹ Stephen Gosson complained of the 'many wanton books which, being translated into English, have poisoned the old manners of our country with foreign delights', and William Rankins claimed that foreign influence prompted men to 'practise uncivill conversation'.²¹⁰ Daniel Tuvil wrote that 'God is not an *Italianated* Courtier; nor doth hee euer entertaine vs with hippe-courtesie'.²¹¹

By the 1620s this criticism had become a topic of satire. The ideal course of education by the universities and Inns of Court, the poet Francis Lenton believed, was stymied by 'the yovng gallants whirlingigge'. Instead of reading Littleton, he wasted his time with Don Quixote and Ben Jonson's plays. When 'his parents him supply to buy him bookes' instead of 'Cokes Reports' he spent his money in 'fencing, dauncing, or at other sports'.²¹² John Earle, the future tutor to Charles II, claimed that gentlemen were sent to the university because 'there were the best Fencing and Dancing-Schools'.²¹³ When Henry Burton offered his public apology in 1636 he carefully pointed out that he was not using 'the Court language or dialect', but rather opted for being 'bould'.²¹⁴

The critique of Italian manners often included a severe stricture of duelling. Thomas Nashe pointed to 'these Italionate conferences about a Duell', which occurred, according to him, 'when a man, being specially toucht in reputation, or challenged to the field vpon equall tearmes, calls all his frends together, and askes their aduice how he should carrie himselfe in the action'.²¹⁵ In Nicholas Breton's *The court and country*, the courtier eulogised 'the gallant life of the Court', including 'the courtesy of the Gentlemen'; the whole place was full of 'sweete Creatures and ciuill Behaiour'. The country-man, however, retorted, linking duelling

²⁰⁹ Haly Heron, *A newe discourse of morall philosophie, entituled the kayes of counsaile* (London, 1579), pp. 14–15.

²¹⁰ Gosson cited in Einstein 1903, pp. 167–8, see in general also pp. 164–5. W[illiam] R[ankins], *The English ape, the Italian imitation, the footesteppes of France* (London, 1588), p. 6, cited in Anna Bryson 1998, p. 77.

²¹¹ Tuvil, *Christian purposes*, p. 31.

²¹² Francis Lenton, *The yovng gallants whirlingigge; or youths reakes* (London, 1629), pp. 4–5.

²¹³ [John Earle], *Micro-cosmographie. Or, a peece of the world discovered; in essayes and characters* (London, 1628), sig. E₅^r.

²¹⁴ Henry Burton, *An apology of an appeale. Also an epistle to the true-hearted nobility* (n.p., 1636), p. 18. See also C[ulpeper], *Morall discourses*, pp. 2–3.

²¹⁵ Thomas Nashe, *Haue with you to Saffron-walden, or Gabriell Harueys hunt is vp* (1596), in *The works*, III, p. 21. See also Robert Greene, *A quip for an vpstart courtier* (London, 1592), sigs. B₂^v, B₃^v–4^r.

with court gallants. The implication was that duelling formed an integral part of 'the gallant life of the Court'.²¹⁶ In his parody of the courtier, Thomas Dekker likewise depicted the courtier as exceptionally arrogant and quarrelsome.²¹⁷ According to John Earle, duelling and 'complimentary' rather than 'respectfull' entertainment went hand in hand.²¹⁸ It was, as another commentator put it, above all the 'Noble Cavallier' who had a propensity to fight duels.²¹⁹

Fynes Moryson wholeheartedly agreed with those who thought that the Italians were the masters of refined manners. He declared: 'By sweetness of language, and singular Art in seasoning their talke and behaiour with great ostentation of Courtesy, they make their Conuersation sweete and pleasing to all men, easily gayning the good will of those with whome they liue.' But, as anyone even modestly acquainted with the theory of civil conversation well knew, this courtesy was far from being thoroughly sincere. Indeed, Moryson pointed out that the Italians were 'the greatest dissemblers in the world'. It followed that

no trust is to be reposed in their wordes, the flattering tongue hauing small acquaintance with a sincere heart, espetially among the Italyans, who will offer Curtesyes freely, and presse the acceptance vehemently, only to squeeze out Complement on both sydes, they neyther meaning to performe them, nor yet daring to accept them, because in that case they would repute the Acceptor ignorant and vnciuill.²²⁰

Closely related to the Italians' total command of civil courtesy was their profound knowledge of the points of honour. They could, Moryson wrote disparagingly, 'excellently dispute of honour and like vertues'. It was no surprise therefore that the Italians were 'most impatient of any the least reproch or iniury'. But because the Council of Trent had prohibited duelling and because their princes were 'seuerely punishing all quarrells', the Italians, instead of duels 'vpon equall tearmes with his Adversarye', had now to resort to murders.²²¹

Thomas Palmer offered in 1606 an even fuller critical analysis of Italian manners. He began his account by lamenting the fact that the English

²¹⁶ Nicholas Breton, *The court and country*, sigs. A4^{r-v}, C3^{r-v}; see also Barclay, *The mirroure*, pp. 73, 88–90.

²¹⁷ Thomas Dekker, *The guls horne-booke* (London, 1609), pp. 22–3.

²¹⁸ [Earle], *Micro-cosmographie*, sig. K5^{r-v}.

²¹⁹ Thomas Urquhart, *Epigrams: diuine and moral* (London, 1641), p. 45.

²²⁰ *Shakespeare's Europe: a survey of the condition of Europe, at the end of the sixteenth century. Being unpublished chapters of Fynes Moryson's Itinerary (1617)*, ed. Charles Hughes, 2nd edn (New York, 1967), pp. 415, 408.

²²¹ *Shakespeare's Europe*, pp. 404, 402. See in general, Churchyard, *A generall rehearsall*, sigs. Oiv^v–Pj^r.

admire Italy so uncritically and consequently travel there so frequently. They did this partly for cultural and academic reasons. But the English mainly frequented Italy in order to learn either the values of Italian republicanism or those of the Italian court culture. Italy was 'an ancient nurserie and shop of libertie' and 'multiplex and different gouernments, and sundrie policies' were present there. Yet, Palmer insisted, this was futile because these were 'different gouernments from ours'.²²²

Nonetheless, if Italian republicanism was dangerous at worst and useless at best in England even more so was the Italian theory of civil courtesy. According to Palmer, 'the ciuilitie of that Countrey' was mixed with several 'inconueniences and corruptions'. On the one hand, Italian civility only concerned the appearance; on the other hand, it was coupled with extreme sensitivity to insults. Paraphrasing William Thomas, Palmer described the Italian: 'in conuersation hee be not offensiue, but obedient and humble to his superiour, to his equall obseruant, to his inferior gentill and courteous, amiable to strangers and swimming in complements and louing tearmes'. But 'the least occasion dissolueth auncient bonds of loue'; their 'ciuill offices' were exceptionally 'vnsteadie and inconstant'. More importantly even the smallest insult could end in a duel. Palmer was convinced that 'the ciuilitie that is in them cannot brooke vnciuilitie proffered, without risentment in the highest nature'.²²³ Palmer contrasted this with the civility and manners which he found in 'the Court of *England*'. Mainly because of 'the puritie of Religion (which is the best Ciuilian)' the English court was 'perfect in ciuility & good manners'.²²⁴

In *As you like it*, Shakespeare heaped ridicule on the meticulous duelling code of civil courtesy. Throughout the play the court was closely associated with both civility and gentle manners and duels as well. Duellists' notion of reflexive honour was 'the bubble reputation', and when Touchstone presented himself as a courtier he listed his accomplishments:

I have trod a measure, I have flatt' red a lady, I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy, I have undone three tailors, I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one.²²⁵

Touchstone linked duelling directly with courtesy manuals, noting that we quarrel in print, by the book – as you have books for good manners . . .²²⁶

²²² Thomas Palmer, *An essay of the meanes how to make our trauailes, into forraine countries, the more profitable and honourable* (London, 1606), pp. 42–4.

²²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 42, 64–5. ²²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–4.

²²⁵ William Shakespeare, *As you like it*, II, vii, 152; V, iv, 44–7. ²²⁶ *Ibid.*, V, iv, 90–1; IV, I, 12.

Ben Jonson called duelling 'the courtliest kind of quarrel' in *The magnetic lady*.²²⁷ In *The alchemist* he also parodied the duelling code of the courtesy theory. When Drugger noted that

to carry quarrels,
As gallants do, and manage 'em, by line,

Face replied that there was

a table,
With mathematical demonstrations,
Touching the art of quarrels.²²⁸

As well as expressing their disapproval of and pouring their ridicule on the punctilious code of civic courtesy and duelling, the critics launched a more pre-emptive attack on the theory of civil courtesy. Lodovick Bryskett made such an attack in *A discourse of civill life*. Bryskett's closeness to Italy and to the Italian courtesy theory is well attested. He was born in England from Italian parents, had many correspondents in Italy and accompanied Sir Philip Sidney on his continental tour in the early 1570s.²²⁹ His *Discourse* is an adaptation of Giambattista Giralaldi Cinzio's *Dialoghi della vita ciuile*. The work bore an especially close resemblance to Guazzo's work. 'The course', Bryskett opened his treatise, 'which I hold in this treatise, is by way of dialogue . . . to discourse vpon the morall vertues, yet not omitting the intellectuall, to the end to frame a gentleman fit for ciuill conuersation, and to set him in the direct way that leadeth him to his ciuill felicitie'.²³⁰

Bryskett harshly condemned lying, declaring that 'it is reputed so great a shame to be accounted a lyer, that any other iniury is cancelled by giuing the lie'. He was convinced that nothing less than an utter destruction of 'the societie and ciuill conuersation of men' would ensue from lying. The only conceivable solution to counter the accusation of lying would appear to be a duel: he who had been given the lie 'standeth so charged in his honor and reputation, that he cannot disburden himselfe of that imputation, but by striking of him that hath so giuen it, or by chalenging him the combat'.²³¹ Such a conclusion, Bryskett went on, could be vindicated by Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which in fact the advocates of duelling had quoted. In his account of epideictic oration in the first book of the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle had argued that 'it is noble to avenge oneself on one's enemies and not to come to terms with them'; and in his account of the

²²⁷ Ben Jonson, *The magnetic lady*, III, iv, 127, quoted from *The complete plays of Ben Jonson*, ed. G. A. Wilkes (4 vols., Oxford, 1982).

²²⁸ Ben Jonson, *The alchemist*, II, vi, 63-4, 66-8. ²²⁹ See Plomer and Cross 1927.

²³⁰ Bryskett, *A discourse of civill life*, p. 5. ²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-5.

forensic oration he further discussed revenge, pointing out that 'revenge, too, is pleasant'.²³²

Having presented the case for duelling, Bryskett immediately challenged it. The duel was, he insisted, 'contrary to all equity, and ciuill and honest conuersation'. Had Aristotle himself not judged those who were of 'reuengefull minds' to be 'men vnworthy of ciuil conuersation'?²³³ Furthermore, he also argued that Aristotle had not had a duel but a judicial case in mind. Most importantly, Bryskett maintained that rhetoric in general and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in particular should not be taken as a guide to civic life and civil conversation. It was Aristotle's *Ethics* 'from whence the rules of ciuill life are to be drawne, and not from his Rhetorikes'. But the advocates of the duel worked on the *Rhetoric* 'as though from thence men were to take the precepts of ciuill conuersation or politike gouernement, whence only the rules and method of well speaking are to be taken, and not of ciuill felicitie'. 'Rhetorike', Bryskett concluded, 'is ordained for iudgements and controuersies, but not for instruction of ciuill life and manners', and only those parts of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* were to be accepted 'in ciuil or politike life' which conformed with his *Ethics*.²³⁴

Bryskett's argument against duelling was thus an essential part of a larger project to redefine the notion of civil conversation. Rather than being a theory of polite conversation and gentlemanly comportment, civil conversation was, for Bryskett, equivalent to a theory of civic life. When he employed the term 'civil conversation' he always coupled it with notions such as virtue, civil felicity and civic life. His treatise was not so much a guide to civil courtesy as a treatise on civic life in the classical humanist tradition.²³⁵

In mounting his attack on the duelling theory, Bacon offered an even more comprehensive critique of the entire theory of civil courtesy. He began by pointing out that it was the theory of courtesy which ultimately accounted for the new fashion of duelling, and accused certain Italian and French 'vaine discourses' of advocating duelling.²³⁶ Bacon was thoroughly acquainted with the theory of courtesy and civil conversation. His earliest comments on it come from 1595–6 and in *The advancement of learning* (1605) he offered a short account of it. 'Ciuite knowledge' consisted

²³² Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 9, 1367^a20; I, 11, 1370^b30. Cf. also Aristotle's discussion of anger, II, 2, 1378^a31–1380^a4.

²³³ Bryskett, *A discourse of ciuill life*, pp. 71, 78. ²³⁴ Ibid., pp. 74, 76–7, 81–2.

²³⁵ For the disparity between classical humanism and the theory of the courtier, see e.g. Javitch 1978, pp. 7–16, 18–49, 141–62. For Bryskett's immediate context, see Peltonen 1995, ch. 1.

²³⁶ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 10, 12.

of 'wisdom of the behauour, wisdom [*sic*] of Businesse; & wisdom of *state*'. 'Wisdom of the behauour' or 'the wisdom of conuersation' amounted to the art of courtesy and civil conversation and thus attests to Bacon's familiarity with the theory of courtesy. Indeed, it concerned both behaviour or 'countenance' and 'speeche' or 'conuersation'.²³⁷ Just like Simon Robson, Bacon argued that 'a man maie destroy the force of his woords with his countenance'.²³⁸ Sometimes Bacon compared the outward behaviour to a garment and argued that it was but a reflection of an inner virtue. 'It is easy', he wrote, 'to make a comely garment for a body that is itself well-proportioned, whereas a deformed body can never be so helped by tailor's art but the counterfeit will appear.'²³⁹ On the whole, however, this was not necessarily so. There was no inescapable link between 'honest and reformed Mynds' on the one hand and 'an Elegancy and finesse of Carriage' on the other.²⁴⁰ Bacon mainly saw courtesy as a mere outward means of hiding the lack of a virtuous character. Whereas moral philosophy aimed at 'Internall goodness', the wisdom of behaviour, like other branches of civil knowledge, required only 'an Externall goodness'.²⁴¹ Courtesy 'as a Garment of the Minde' could not only 'sett foorth the anye good making of the minde' but also 'hide any deformity'.²⁴²

Nevertheless, Bacon disparaged the importance of courtesy and civil conversation. While he argued that courtesy should not be 'despised', because it had 'an influence also into businesse and gouernment', he emphasised even more strongly that it should not be too much striven after, for courtesy easily made a man superficial and affected. Nothing could be worse than to carry the manners of the stage into real life. Those who were 'accomplished in that fourme of vrbanity', Bacon wrote, were content with it and 'sildome aspire to higher vertue'.²⁴³ Even worse were those who tried to compensate for their lack of true virtue by seeking 'Comlines by Reputation'. But the worst were those who did not have even this reputation and who therefore resorted to '*Puntos* and *complementes*' – excessive formalities.²⁴⁴

²³⁷ Francis Bacon, *The advancement of learning* (1605), ed. Michael Kiernan, The Oxford Francis Bacon vi (Oxford, 2000), p. 157. I find the account of Bacon's notion of courtesy in Gaukroger 2001, pp. 10–14 unconvincing.

²³⁸ Bacon, *The advancement of learning*, p. 157.

²³⁹ Bacon, *Letters*, II, p. 8. See also *The advancement of learning*, p. 50.

²⁴⁰ Bacon, *The advancement of learning*, p. 156. ²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 158. See also *De augmentis* (1623), *Works*, v, p. 66–7.

²⁴³ Bacon, *The advancement of learning*, p. 157; *Letters*, II, p. 9.

²⁴⁴ Bacon, *The advancement of learning*, p. 157.

In 1597 he contrasted between a 'polished pen' and 'a polished heart', which was 'free from affection and affectation',²⁴⁵ and in 1605 he was convinced that Thomas Playfere, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, had expressed his good liking of *The advancement of learning* 'more significantly . . . than out of courtesy or civil respect'.²⁴⁶ When he advised George Villiers in 1618 he spoke slightly of courtesy: 'There are many places in Court which a mere formal man may perform . . . And yet in these the choice had need be of honest and faithful servants, as well as of comely outsides, who can bow the knee and kiss the hand, and perform other services of small importance compared to this of public employment.'²⁴⁷

Similarly, Bacon began his essay 'Of ceremonies and respects' (1597) by emphasising the importance of courtesy; only those who 'have exceeding great parts of virtue' could afford to be utterly sincere. In the third edition of 1625 he also argued that polite manners did 'much adde, to a Mans Reputation'. Yet, these formalities should not be given too much weight. First, contrary to what many theorists of courtesy claimed, Bacon deemed that they were exceedingly easy to learn. 'To attaine them', he wrote, 'it almost sufficeth, not to despise them.' Moreover, men should not be 'too Perfect in Complements'. To put too much stress on them, Bacon maintained, 'is not only Tedious, but doth Diminish the Faith and Credit'.²⁴⁸ When he argued against duelling in Star Chamber, he upheld these same principles. Only 'a man of a disputed valour ought ever to be more careful of his reputation than a man of a declared' valour.²⁴⁹

Polite formalities were thus given too much emphasis; to make matters worse, these formalities implied a despicable notion of injury. Bacon, together with many other critics of duelling, aimed at repudiating this notion of injury. La Noue complained that there had been a dramatic change in the notion of injury and insult. Whereas in former times men had not been 'moued without great iniuries . . . now a word of nothing or in iest bringeth the lie'. Moreover, even 'a sharpe looke shall be accounted an iniurie, and a slaunder or false opinion call for a combat: so ticklish and pricking is our dayly conversation'.²⁵⁰ In England many insisted that it was a gross error to suppose that 'a crosse word' or 'every slender occasion' brought into question one's status as a gentleman,²⁵¹ that

²⁴⁵ Bacon, *Letters*, II, p. 82. ²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, III, p. 300.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, p. 24; see also p. 25 where Bacon scorned flattery in court.

²⁴⁸ Bacon, *Essays*, in Vickers, *Bacon*, pp. 82–3; Bacon, *The essays*, pp. 157–9. For the second edition of 1612 see *The works*, VI, pp. 576–7.

²⁴⁹ Bacon, *Letters*, VI, pp. 112–13. ²⁵⁰ La Noue, *The politicke*, p. 160.

²⁵¹ Barnes, *Vox belli*, p. 22.

‘the taking of the wall, or giuing of a disgracefull word’ scarcely amounted to a serious insult,²⁵² or that ‘a discourtesie’ made you ‘not the worse’; a discourteous word did of course touch one’s honour, but a mere touch did not hurt.²⁵³ ‘The Punctilioes of Reputation’ required that even the smallest ‘jeast, or freedom of language’, as the divine Thomas Pestel revealingly wrote, should be requited by a challenge.²⁵⁴

Bacon fully concurred with this analysis. He told Star Chamber:

But I say the compounding of quarrells, which is other-wise in vse, by priuate noble men and gentleman, it is so punctuall, and hath such reference and respect vnto the receyued conceits, whats before hand, and whats behinde hand, and I cannot tel what, as without all question it doth, in a fashion, countenance and authorise this practise of *Duellis*, as if it had in it some-what of right.²⁵⁵

In other words, courtesy theory, with its meticulous and ‘punctuall’ way of ‘compounding of quarrells’, ultimately underlay duelling.

Whereas courtesy theorists argued that even the smallest possible digression from the prescribed rules occasioned serious insult, the critics of duelling maintained that the best way to avoid this ‘compounding of quarrells’ was simply to ignore the meticulous rules of courtesy. It was widely agreed amongst the critics that the chief characteristic of a truly valorous man was the ability to control his passions. The tone was set by Pierre de La Primaudaye, who contended in the first book of *The French academie* that ‘true magnanimitie’ consisted of bearing and enduring ‘with al modestie and patience the outrages and wrongs of our enimies’. We should simply ignore ‘the iniurious speeches of our enimies vttered in wrath & of ill will to hurt vs’.²⁵⁶ George Gifford began his similar argument by rehearsing the central claim of the duelling theory: ‘If a man haue an iniurie offered him, or be challenged with some reprochefull terme, as to bee called cowarde or boy, and will not aduenture although it shoulde be eyther to kyll or to be killed, they thinke hee is vtterlie dishonoured, and the glory of his manhoode is stayned for euer.’ Gifford admitted that ‘Fortitude or the right man-hoode is a vertue’ indeed, but he vehemently denied the conclusion drawn by the duellists. In private quarrells a truly valiant man was ‘lowly, gentle, curteous, and meeke as a Lambe’.²⁵⁷

²⁵² Gibson, *Christiana-polemica*, p. 23.

²⁵³ G. F., *Duell-ease*, pp. 56–7, 4–5. See also Barclay, *The mirrour*, p. 94.

²⁵⁴ Pestel, *Sermons*, pp. 326–7.

²⁵⁵ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 16.

²⁵⁶ La Primaudaye, *The French academie*, pp. 381, 384.

²⁵⁷ Gifford, *A treatise of true fortitude*, sigs. D3^{r-v}, D4^{r-v}. See also Bryskett, *A discourse of ciuill life*, pp. 74, 87.

The argument that true valour consisted of ignoring petty insults with patience rather than revenging them with fury was endlessly repeated. 'When a mans reputation is touched by slaunder or disgrace', many would think that there was 'an honest quarrell' and that 'he standeth vpon his reputation to maintaine it with the force of his owne sworde'. But, John Norden claimed, 'this is but a maske to couer a dishonorable affection'. This kind of 'simple disgrace' should rather be ignored.²⁵⁸ Edward Cooke went even further. He not merely wrote that 'many are accounted valiant, who haue no sparke of true Valour in them; such are all our Thrasonickall Braggadoshes, Ragamuffin Rorers, who will quarrell with any man they meet . . . and send their challenges abroad as ostentations of their Valour'. He also insisted that true valour was 'a wise Cowardlinesse'. The truly valorous 'will not venture their life vpon any sleight occasion'.²⁵⁹

Bacon held that the best and easiest remedy for these questions of honour was both to ignore trifling insults and to harden one's sense of one's own reputation. In his youthful device 'Of tribute' he argued that 'Fortitude is able to steel men's minds'.²⁶⁰ Fortitude is 'The Vertue of *Adversity*' and thus 'more Heroicall' than temperance, he wrote in his essay 'Of aduersitie', while in 'Of revenge' he gave advice on how to ignore insults.²⁶¹ In a case at King's Bench in 1612 Bacon pointed out that far from being 'hard to forgive . . . generous and magnanimous spirits are readiest to forgive'. The despicable opinion of revenge, he told his audience, originated in Italy.²⁶² When he argued against duelling in Star Chamber, Bacon maintained that gentlemen's sense of reputation seemed to be 'but of copwebbe lawne, or such light stuffe, which certainly is weaknesse, and not true greatnesse of mind'. Instead of being swift to take offence, gentlemen should swallow small insults. 'But for this apprehension of a disgrace, that a fillippe to the person should bee

²⁵⁸ Norden, *The mirror*, p. 26, in general pp. 24–6. See also Henry Crosse, *The schoole of pollicie: or the araignement of state-abuses* (London, 1605), sigs. B3^v–C2^r; Robert Johnson, *Essaies or, rather imperfect offers* (London, 1607), sigs. G3^v–4^r.

²⁵⁹ Edward Cooke, *The character of warre, or the image of martiall discipline* (London, 1626), sig. D3^r. See also Francis Lenton, *Characterismi: or, Lentons leasvres. Expressed in essayes and characters* (London, 1631), sigs. E1^v–2^r; Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, iv, pp. 464–5; Johnson, *Essaies*, sig. G3^v; [anon.], *The treasure*, pp. 122–6; Chevalier, *The ghosts*, p. 127; Barnes, *Vox belli*, pp. 22–3; Pierre Charron, *Of wisdome three bookes*, transl. Samson Lennard (London, [n.d., before 1612]), pp. 92, 318–19, 529; [Earle], *Micro-cosmographie*, sigs. K3^r–5^v; R[ichard] Y[oung], *The victory of patience* (London, 1636), especially pp. 73–4; Stafford, *Honour and vertue*, p. 55.

²⁶⁰ Bacon, 'Of tribute; or, giving that which is due', in Vickers ed., *Bacon*, pp. 22–51, at p. 28.

²⁶¹ Bacon, *The essayes*, pp. 16–18.

²⁶² *State trials*, II, col. 751. See also [Arthur Hall], *A letter sent by F.A. touching the proceedings in a private quarrell and unkindnesse* (1576), in *Miscellanea antiqua Anglicana* (London, 1816), p. 17.

a mortall wound to the reputation, it were good that men did hearken vnto' the principle, '*A Gentlemans honor should bee, De tela crassiore*, of a good strong warppe or webbe that euery little thing should not catch in it.'²⁶³

When the critics of duelling finally examined the most important notion of the duelling theory – that of giving the lie – their tone became highly ironic. To accept the theory of civil courtesy and thus to take trifling incidents as serious insults was ridiculous enough, but to take a lie given as the most serious insult of all was downright ludicrous. Raleigh pointed out that on the one hand, he who gives the lie to a man who had actually lied 'doth him no wrong at all, neither ought it to be more heinously taken, than to tell him, that he hath broken any promise which he hath otherwise made'. If, on the other hand, there had been no lie, and yet the lie is given, then the giver 'doth therein give the lie directly to himself'. To feel deeply insulted in such a situation was utterly ridiculous. 'And what cause have I', Raleigh posed the rhetorical question, 'if I say that the sun shines when it doth shine, and that another fellow tells me I lie, for it is midnight, to prosecute such an one to death, for making himself a foolish ruffian, and a liar in his own knowledge?' Of course, Raleigh acknowledged, 'it is an extreme rudeness to tax any man in public with an untruth . . . but all that is rude ought not to be civilized with death'.²⁶⁴

The absurd nature of giving the lie became readily obvious, owing to the fact that the whole theory of courtesy implied nothing so much as constant lying. Montaigne noted the contradiction that men on the one hand are advised to 'frame and fashion themselves unto' constant lying, '*for dissimulation is one of the notablest qualities of this age*', and yet on the other they 'are more sharply offended with the reproach of this vice . . . than with any other'; 'it is the extremest injury, [that] may be done us in words, to upbraid and reproch us with a lie'.²⁶⁵ Similarly, Raleigh pointed out that most of the men 'who present death on the points of their swords to all that give' the lie to them, 'use nothing so much in their conversation

²⁶³ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 27–9. See also Bacon, *The advancement of learning*, p. 139; Bacon, *The essays*, p. 171; Bacon, *The works*, v, p. 10, vii, p. 150. Both arguments are cited in G. F., *Dwell-ease*, pp. 57, 59.

²⁶⁴ Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, iv, pp. 459–60, see also p. 465. Raleigh had been reprimanded twice for duelling in 1580, Hammer 1999, p. 46. For other mockeries of giving the lie see e.g. Thomas Overbury, *His wife. With additions of new characters, and many other wittie conceits neuer before printed* (London, 1622), sig. Q6^{r-v}; Friedrich Dedekind, *The schoole of slovenrie: or, Cato turnd wrong side outward*, transl. R. F. (London, 1605), pp. 40–1.

²⁶⁵ Montaigne, *Essays*, I, p. 393.

and course of life, as to speak and swear falsely'. There were various kinds of lies, such as 'lies of necessity' and lies which proceeded 'from fear and cowardice', but the most common ones were 'complimental lies'. These were the lies which formed an integral part of polite conversation. 'Nay', Raleigh asked, 'what is the profession of love that men make nowadays? what is the vowing of their service, and of all they have, used in their ordinary compliments, and, in effect, to every man whom they bid but good-morrow, or salute, other than a courteous and courtlike kind of lying?' Complimentary lies were such a great fashion that he who failed to use them was 'accounted either dull or cynical'.²⁶⁶

The most hilarious descriptions of the meticulous rules of the duelling theory, the trifling nature of injuries and the ludicrous panoply of giving the lie is to be found from contemporary plays. In *The alchemist*, Face explained to Kastriel:

Sir, for the *Duello*,
The Doctor, I assure you, shall inform you,
To the least shadow of a hair: and show you,
An instrument he has, of his own making,
Wherewith, no sooner shall you make report
Of any quarrel, but he will take the height on't,
Most instantly; and tell in what degree,
Of safety it lies in, or mortality.
And how it may be borne, whether in a right line,
Or a half-circle; or may, else, be cast
Into an angle blunt, if not acute;
All this he will demonstrate. And then, rules,
To give and take the lie by.²⁶⁷

By far the most famous mockery of the role of giving the lie in duelling theory is of course the one presented in *As you like it*, where Touchstone ridicules the meticulous duelling code of the courtesy theory, expounding the degrees of the lie.

I will name you the degrees. The first, the Retort Courteous; the second, the Quip Modest; the third, the Reply Churlish; the fourth, the Reproof Valiant; the fifth, the Countercheck Quarrelsome; the sixth, the Lie with Circumstance; the seventh, the Lie Direct. All these you may avoid but the Lie Direct; and you may avoid that too, with an If. I knew when seven justices could not take

²⁶⁶ Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, iv, pp. 459–60. Pestel, *Sermons*, pp. 332–3. For some incidents see G. F., *Duell-ease*, pp. 4–5; [Arthur Hall], *A letter*.

²⁶⁷ Ben Jonson, *The alchemist*, iii, iv, 25–37.

up a quarrel, but when the parties were met themselves, one of them thought but of an If; as 'If you said so, then I said so'; and they shook hands and swore brothers. Your If is the only peace-maker; much virtue in If.²⁶⁸

Bacon scorned exactly the same hairsplitting with the word 'if'. In the duelling case between Lord Darcy and Gervase Markham in Star Chamber in 1616, he noted that the challenge 'is not directly nor appertly a challenge, but it is an invitation to a challenge... it is a challenge to a challenge'. But to conclude from this that it is not punishable was absurd. 'The King's edict', he insisted, 'will [go] out at a window if this be suffered.' Man could not get away with a challenge by an 'if'. It was, Bacon told Star Chamber, mere idle talk to argue that 'I will but put a *si* [i.e. if] in the challenge; as to say, if you have a mind to fight with me then send me your man or your writing. I stand not upon the definitive words of a challenge.'²⁶⁹

The theory of courtesy and duelling was thus utterly misleading. Its notions of honour and valour were deceptive, as was its concept of civility. On the one hand, it directed people to use complimentary lies in their daily conversation. On the other hand, the very same theory prescribed that giving the lie was to hurl the most vicious insult. The paradox was of course that a duel arose from speaking the truth.

Complaints had been made, Bacon noted, that the English law did not provide 'sufficient punishment, and reparations for contumely words', but this was absurd. It was simply best to ignore 'every touch or light blow of person'.²⁷⁰ Nowhere was this truer, Bacon went on, than with the lie given. It was nothing short of 'madnes' to demand 'a punishment uppon the *lye giuen*, which in effect is but a word of deniall, a negatiue of anothers saying'.²⁷¹ Any serious lawgiver would agree with Solon, who had argued 'that he had not ordained any punishment for it, because he neuer imagined the world would haue beene so fantastickall as to take it so highly'.²⁷²

To drive their point home many of the critics argued that gentlemen should simply imitate the Romans and the Greeks who had had various forms of single combat but nothing like the private duel of honour.²⁷³ Montaigne argued that 'this custom was not anciently amongst the Romans and Graecians'; it occasioned some surprise 'to see them [i.e. the ancients] wrong and give one another the lie, and yet never enter into quarrell'.²⁷⁴ Joshua Sylvester rhymed:

²⁶⁸ *As you like it*, v, iv, 90–103.

²⁶⁹ Bacon, *Letters*, vi, p. 111.

²⁷⁰ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 19, 26, 28.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 26, 28.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 26.

²⁷³ Bryskett, *A discourse of civill life*, pp. 66–9; Chevalier, *The ghosts*, p. 69.

²⁷⁴ Montaigne, *Essays*, bk II, ch. xviii, II, p. 394.

Those valiant *Romans*, Victors of all Lands,
 They plac't not *Honour* there where now it stands;
 Nor though it lay, in making of the Sword
 Interpreter of euerie Priuate word;
 Nor stood vpon *Puntillios*, for Repute,
 As now-adayes your *Duellers* pursew't.²⁷⁵

Bacon pointed out that the extant orations of the Romans and the Greeks made it plain 'what extreame and exquisite reproaches were tossed vp and downe in the Senate of *Rome*, and the places of assembly, and the like in *Grecia*'. How had they reacted? According to Bacon, 'no man tooke himselfe fowled by them, but tooke them but for breath, and the stile of an enemy, and eyther despised them or returned them, but no blood spilt about them'.²⁷⁶ In 1616 he said on a similar occasion that despite the fact that the Romans and the Greeks 'had such excellent reproachful speeches', there was 'never a duel' amongst them, 'never no sword drawn'.²⁷⁷

When William Wiseman decided 'to leaue the Scriptures, and Church lawes' since 'the word, and the sword seeme contraries', he immediately turned to ancient '*Philosophers, Poets*, and histories' as more relevant authorities of the gentlemanly virtues of 'fortitude and magnanimity'. They had been experts in 'honour, ignominie, contumely, and disgrace' and readily advised a gentleman not to 'put vp iniuries basely'. They had also stressed the gentleman's obligation to polite behaviour. Wiseman thus acknowledged that the gentleman's speech must be 'sober, without a word vnbeseeeming; his actions [must be] aduised, without touch of temerity; his carriage graue, and staide, without leuity; in righting himselfe, not ouer hasty; if angry, yet not forgetting himselfe'. Philosophy, poetry and history could even 'descend particularly, to tell how hee must goe, and with what composition of body'. Yet, their meticulous interest in outward behaviour and civil conversation of the gentleman had never led them to say 'a word of combate; vnlesse it were for their countrey, or common-weale'. One could not find a single mention of the duel in 'Plato, Plutarke, Seneca or Aristotle'. Of course, Cicero 'sayes, hee that can repulse an iniury and will not, offends as much as if hee forsooke his friends, and kinsfolke'. But the duellists omitted that Cicero had talked 'of no repulsing by fight. He bids vs *pugna pro patria*, Fight for our countrey,

²⁷⁵ Sylvester, *The parliament*, p. 9.

²⁷⁶ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 27–8.

²⁷⁷ Bacon, *The letters*, vi, p. 109. For a succinct account of the Roman customs see Stewart 1994, pp. 55–8, 67–8.

but not for our priuate.' Of course the ancient had had 'many priuate grudges' but they had never fought a single duel of honour. All their 'single fights' had been '*iure belli*'.²⁷⁸

'SATISFACTION FOR ALL KINDS OF OFFENCES'

Much of the criticism of the notions of valour, honour and courtesy as a way of exposing the trifling nature of the theory of the duel was widely shared, but there was one conspicuous name missing from its ranks – the earl of Northampton. Far from making an attempt to disprove the entire theory in *A publication of his majesties edict*, Northampton embraced it wholeheartedly. He accepted its notions of honour and courtesy, as well as insult. Of course, in the end he argued against duelling. But in striking contrast to Bacon, for instance, he did not do this by revealing the hollowness of its theory. Instead, he simply wanted to find an alternative solution to the problems of gentlemanly reputation. It was not for nothing that the royal proclamation against duelling specifically stated that its aim was to 'relieve men that are sensitive of honor' – men that were 'offended by disgrace'.²⁷⁹ The proclamation also espoused 'the custome and construction of the dayes in which wee live' according to which an accusation of lying was 'matched with those wrongs that are reputed to be most exorbitant'.²⁸⁰

Gentlemen, Northampton wrote in the king's name, were so hypersensitive about their good honour and reputation that it was almost impossible to avoid duels. An accusation of cowardice 'leaves very deepe impressions in the mindes of forward Gentlemen, that are not so sensitive of smart, as feareful of dishonor'. Dwelling on the same ideas as Philibert de Vienne, that gentlemen were mostly concerned with outward appearances, and employing the vocabulary of duelling treatises, Northampton pointed out that duels were almost a necessity:

Considering how strictly all men that conuerse in the world, are bound to giue an account to the world for all their actions that are visible, and therefore without satisfaction vpon the proffer of offence, so farre as the point of reputation doeth vрге, it will be found almost impossible to stay the current of quarrelling.²⁸¹

Honour, according to Northampton, was thus both horizontal and reflexive.

²⁷⁸ Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sigs. P1^v–2^v, P3^r. See also e.g. G. F., *Dwell-ease*, sig. C3^r, p. 59.

²⁷⁹ *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 304. ²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1, pp. 304, 306–7. See also Cust 1998.

²⁸¹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 14.

The aged counsellor confessed that it was extremely difficult to find any 'ground of Iustice' for 'a friend [to] perswade, or a superiour [to] command one that is wounded, either in his person, or his good name, to passe ouer the least imputation of discredit, as if it were but the biting of a flea'.²⁸² Whereas most critics of duelling never tired of disparaging the thin skin of gentlemen, Northampton disagreed, fully accepting a gentleman's sensitivity about his honour. The difficulty of stopping duelling was compounded by the fact that 'to end a quarrell between two men of worth and valour' by any other means was well-nigh impossible. Any conceivable solution was most liable to end in 'disgrace or wrong to either side'. The reason was not far to seek, 'considering how pettie circumstances are sufficient to put these clockes both out of temper & true motion, that are wound vp with the greatest warinesse'.²⁸³

It is thus hardly surprising to find Northampton accepting the entire theory of the duel. His great expertise in the duelling code cannot be questioned. Judging by his collectanea, he had studied it with great care. Penning the treatise of 1614 under the king's name, he had an excellent opportunity to put his extensive learning to use. He began his exposition of duelling theory by arguing that the duel mainly arose from 'discourtesie'. He observed that 'the very naturall and kindly seeds of quarrels, commonly brought to the bloodie issue, are such iniuries . . . [that] touch the person or the reputation of one that stands confidently in the defence of his owne worth'.²⁸⁴ He went on to distinguish between verbal and real wrongs. Whereas the former consisted of accusations of 'dishonest fact', or of giving 'the Lye', the latter comprised 'Blowes, Stripes, or Hurts in all degrees' as well as 'all scornefull lookes, actes, or figures, that implice contempt, all Libels published in any sort to the disgrace of any Gentleman; or any person, whom that Gentleman is bound in credite to defend, as himselfe'. All these acts, Northampton assured, 'trench as deeply into reputation, as the Stabbe it selfe doeth into a man that esteems Honour'.²⁸⁵

Northampton first treated verbal insults, starting with the general 'reprochfull termes' which offered 'deepe disgrace' to a gentleman. Closely following duelling manuals and courtesy books, he emphasised that it did not make much difference whether these uncivil words were uttered directly to the gentleman in question or to someone else. In both cases the words insulted gentlemen, because they, as Northampton put it

²⁸² Ibid., p. 14. ²⁸³ Ibid., pp. 19–20.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 40–1. ²⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 42–3. For libels see Fox 1994.

(echoing Annibale Romei), 'may bee robbed of that reputation, which as a *Birth right* they brought with them into the world, and cannot forfait nor forgoe, without some acte done by themselves vnworthily'. If all the terms which injured a gentleman could be listed, the whole problem would be easy to solve. But unfortunately these words were 'in number too many, and in nature too different, to be comprised in a List'. One thing was clear, however. Even the least hint of questioning a gentleman's worthiness touched upon his honour and demanded immediate compensation. Exceeding even Philibert's satirical account, Northampton argued that 'wheninsoeuer reputation is agreed, though it be but in the weight of one graine, it ought to be repaired, and as much restored, as hath beene diminished'.²⁸⁶ Moreover, and again agreeing with the courtesy theory, Northampton emphasised that it did not make any difference whether the 'aspersion' which was 'casteth vpon another mans reputation' was true or false. In both cases it questioned the gentleman's reputation, and it was this rather than the truth of the aspersion which was at stake. Once uttered, the vilification was beyond a gentleman's control.²⁸⁷

As we have seen, most critics of duelling theory not merely questioned the idea of giving the lie but heaped ridicule on it. Northampton was clearly aware of this criticism. First he acknowledged that he was 'not ignorant, that among the *Romanes* . . . the Lye was thought to be no other, then an earnest negation of a bold affirmation'. This was most obvious, he noted, in the proceedings of their public assemblies. The senators used the very word 'without displeasure, as a word of course'. He also said that it was conceivable that giving the lie was harmless – 'snakes may be couched in mens bosomes without hazard, if their teeth bee first plucked out'. Having raised these objections, however, Northampton hastily brushed them aside. Whereas other critics of duelling argued that giving the lie was impolite, yet by and large negligible, Northampton disagreed. Given the current state of affairs, he argued, 'which mooues Gentlemen wel borne, rather to endure the racke, then the reproch', it was best 'to ranke this [giving the lie] with the highest *verball* wrongs'.²⁸⁸ It followed that he who upbraided 'any man with that vnciuill tearme' should be severely punished.²⁸⁹

In all his predilection for gentlemanly honour, Northampton accepted that there were various degrees of the lie, arguing that 'the Lye it selfe admit qualification in sundry cases, and vpon very pregnant circumstances,

²⁸⁶ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 43–4. ²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 45–6.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 49. In his letter to Northampton, John Finet disagreed, *A letter*, pp. 10–11.

²⁸⁹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 50.

according to the grounds of the *Duellors* themselves'.²⁹⁰ But whereas for Bacon and other censors of duelling these degrees of the lie amounted to nothing but a source of ridicule, Northampton went to the other extreme. He was convinced that the prevalent duelling theory, with its various degrees of the lie, could be detrimental to gentlemanly honour. According to him, too much weight should not be put on the different degrees of the lie, because this might lead one to belittle the injurious nature of even the smallest of them.

Northampton's views about real wrongs were very similar. He gave other critics of duelling short shrift, stressing the extreme discourtesy of all real wrongs. True, there were 'differences betweene greater and lesser occasions and motiues'. It was also the case that the civil law distinguished 'betweene Blowes that smart, or smart not'. But again Northampton emphasised that all these arguments used by other critics of duelling were completely misleading and inimical to true notions of honour, courtesy and gentlemanly behaviour. Irrespective of whether they were 'offences by Blowes with the hand, Stripes with a rod, Bruises with a cudgell, stabbes with a Dagger, or hurts with a Rapier', all these insults, Northampton believed, 'exceede all humanitie'. Moreover, such 'scorne holdes a Gentleman well borne, and sutably [*sic*] behaved, worthy the chastisement of a dog'. It was only natural therefore that extremely harsh punishments should be meted out to men who commit such atrocities.²⁹¹

By now it should be clear that in many respects Northampton was much closer to the advocates of the theory of civil courtesy in general, and to the duelling theorists in particular, than to their critics. He wrote

Moreouer, though it be true, that the trip of a foote, the thrust of an elbow, the making with the mouth or hand an vnciuill signe, doe neither bruise the bone, nor mayme the parts; yet, since the malice, the disgrace, and scorne in these things doe so farre exceede, the fact it selfe (expressing the base reckoning, which they that offer these contempts, make of the person vpon which they braue them,) is to be taxed, and corrected.²⁹²

This analysis was almost word for word taken from courtesy and duelling treatises. Northampton began with the supposition that gentlemen behaved extremely politely towards each other and that even the least

²⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 48–9. ²⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 51–2.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 57. Anthony Weldon's judgement was that 'Northampton though a great Clerke, yet not a wise man, but the grossest Flatterer of the World', A[nthony] W[eldon], *The court and character of King James* (London, 1650), p. 15.

breach of the code was 'an vnciuill signe' that touched upon the gentleman's honour. The gentleman was not treated as he could expect to be treated; his 'reckoning' or status as a gentleman was questioned.

Linda Peck has argued that in his contribution to the anti-duelling campaign Northampton's 'end was to rationalise behaviour in the interest of the state'.²⁹³ Perhaps. But Northampton's plans could only appear rational if one accepted his notions of courtesy, honour and insults. From the point of view of someone like Bacon these notions were closer to 'madness' than rationality. Peck has also argued that 'Northampton shared King James's antipathy to duelling and the code of honour which, imported from Italy and France, had become characteristic of Elizabethan and Jacobean England'.²⁹⁴ While there is little doubt about Northampton's antipathy to duelling, there is no question that, rather than feeling antipathy to the code of honour, Northampton was amongst its most ardent supporters in Jacobean England.

Many of the critics of duelling were convinced that the best remedy for duelling was to undermine the entire concomitant theory of honour, valour and courtesy. In striking contrast, Northampton supported the entire theory, but still wanted to get rid of duelling. So what was his solution? First, he suggested that quarrels should be stopped from sliding into duels. He exhorted the onlookers of an ensuing quarrel to use all possible means to stop it. This direction was especially relevant for those people who regularly abode in places where quarrels between gentlemen were most likely to take place. Hence, 'Our owne Groomeporter, and then all other keepers of gaming houses, of Tennis courts, and bowling Allies' were strongly exhorted 'instantly vpon the giuing of any reproachful word, or passing any blow betweene Gentlemen' to take away 'the weapons of the persons kindled with rage' and 'to keepe them in sunder'.²⁹⁵

Secondly, and much more importantly, Northampton and many other critics sought to prevent duelling by making duels unnecessary. Acknowledging that amongst nobles and gentlemen disagreements involving honour and reputation were a common phenomenon, they suggested a peaceful means of solving these quarrels. Of course, the French edict of 1609, which was soon translated into English, suggested a public combat. Those who had been insulted were advised to complain to the king or 'the Constable and Marshals of France', demanding, if they

²⁹³ Peck 1982, p. 163. ²⁹⁴ Peck 1982, p. 160.

²⁹⁵ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 105–8.

so wanted, a combat, 'which shall be granted them by Vs, according as We shall thinke it expedient for their honour'.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, such a public combat was not suggested in England.²⁹⁷ In its stead, a court of honour, also closely copied from France, was widely proposed. In 1610 Thomas Milles declared that 'the Noble-men for desciding of sutes, concerning their Honors' should turn to 'their Tribunall or proper Martiall Court, which they are wont to call, the Court of Chivalry'.²⁹⁸ The king concurred, arguing that 'a solide & sounde definition' of 'all the pointes of gentlemennis honoure' should be made. But he also said that 'a certaine number of persons waire maide choice of, being noble by birth, of honourable reputation' who, following the example of 'the mareshallis of France', should have 'powaire & authoritie to interprete & compounde all questions of honoure'.²⁹⁹ When James issued his proclamations against reports of duels and duels themselves, a central theme in both was to propose an alternative to duelling. This he found from the High Court of Chivalry. 'And if any man', the proclamation against the reports of duels concluded, 'should find himselfe grieved with any whisperings, or rumours spread abroad, misreporting the cariage of any such matter, he may resort to our Commissioners Marshall, who shall right him in his Reputation, if they finde he be wronged'.³⁰⁰ The other proclamation followed suit. The king sternly prohibited anyone 'to seeke satisfaction by any other meanes then those, which are made good either by the Lawes of the Kingdome, or the Court of Honour'.³⁰¹

Furnishing the details of this alternative for duels was again left to the meticulousness of the earl of Northampton. The real benefit of the proclamation, he emphasised, was that it offered an apt and proper 'satisfaction for all kinds of offences'.³⁰² Whilst the High Court of Chivalry could easily act as a court of honour, beyond the home counties the same task was to be assigned to 'the charitable and honourable

²⁹⁶ [Anon.], *An edict*, pp. 2–5.

²⁹⁷ See, however, [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 6–7, where a combat 'without . . . protection by the Court of Chivalry' is mentioned. Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. P2^v, noted that a single combat was a possibility 'vpon accusation of treason in great persons, where other proofes bee not pregnant enough, as it was in *Richard* the seconds time betweene Hereford, and Mowbrey'. Wiseman also cited similar French examples.

²⁹⁸ Thomas Milles, *The catalogue of honor* (London, 1610), p. 79. Cf. Bryskett, *A discourse of civill life*, pp. 78–9; Perkins, *The whole treatise*, p. 493; William Garrard, *The arte of warre* (London, 1591), pp. 68–9.

²⁹⁹ BL, Cotton MS Titus C.1, f. 238^v.

³⁰⁰ *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 297. See also Squibb 1959, pp. 37–8.

³⁰¹ *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 304. See also pp. 306–7.

³⁰² [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 16–18.

care of the Lords Lieutenants and their Deputies'.³⁰³ During most of James's reign there was a commission which executed the office of Earl Marshal, and the earl of Northampton was one of these commissioners. As early as December 1609 Lord Eure had contacted Northampton with the view of intervening on behalf of his son in a quarrel and 'to daunte the insolencye' of the man who had challenged him.³⁰⁴

Northampton was convinced that 'the Lords in Commission for the office of *Earle Marshall*' were the best 'to iudge matters of this kinde that touch honor'. This was due to 'their Honour by birth, their endeaour out of an infinite desire to doe good, and their skill in the nature of the Subject'.³⁰⁵

To commend the Earl Marshal's court was of course to commend a civil law court. This befitted Northampton, who had been trained in the civil law. He thought that the common law was inappropriate to handle the questions of honour. 'The course of the common law', he added, 'is so tedious, and the determination in conclusion referred to the judgement of twelve poor men, that were never sensible, what belongeth scarce to honesty, much less to honour.' All this could easily be avoided in 'an orderly proceeding' in the court of the Earl Marshal, which 'would mightily reform in sentencing' every insult and in 'seeing these, and the like laws, duly executed'.³⁰⁶

Precisely like the advocates of duelling, Northampton argued that so long as the problem of insults in general and that of giving the lie in particular were not solved, 'men speak barbarously they care not what'.³⁰⁷ But he was also anxious to explain 'how it is possible by words to satisfy a lie, given by equals to each other'. Man, he pointed out, is 'a reasonable creature' and a public apology should be 'esteemed by reasonable men to be a sufficient satisfaction for a lie soe giuen'. He specifically acknowledged that this was exceptionally difficult 'for a man of reputation, and spirit, especially a man at arms', but argued that since no one is perfect, it had always been thought to be particularly 'glorious, and praiseworthy for a free, and generous spirit to give unto all men their right'.³⁰⁸

Apologising was not enough, however. If there was a sufficient evidence of the lie given or of a blow struck, the offender should be

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–3, 44–5. ³⁰⁴ See above pp. 81–2.

³⁰⁵ [Northampton], *A publication* pp. 15, 20–1.

³⁰⁶ [Northampton], 'Of a lie', in Gutch, *Collection*, p. 16; [Henry Howard, the earl of Northampton], 'Duello foiled', in Hearne, *A collection*, II, pp. 223–42, at p. 233.

³⁰⁷ [Northampton], 'Of a lie', in Gutch, *Collection*, p. 16. ³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 13, 14.

committed to prison until he would acknowledge 'both an error in his judgement, and a breach in duetie, in vpbraiding any man with that vnciuill tearme, which Our tender caution hath very sharply prohibited'. He should also 'aske forgiuenesse of his fault' from the privy council. Moreover, punishments were designed to decrease the offender's local and national status. Giving the lie or striking the blow would make him unable to serve in the commission of the peace for seven years. In addition, 'hee shall be bound to the good Behaiiour during the space of the next sixe Moneths', during which time he would be abstained 'from Our Court'.³⁰⁹ Elsewhere he proposed that, whilst the offender remained in prison, he should 'be held, and published, a barbarous, rude, and uncivil person, unmeet, and unfit for civil company'.³¹⁰ Anyone who was tried and found guilty of hurling insults at a gentleman and thus of breaking the rules of civil courtesy had his own status as a gentleman withheld until he recanted.

Northampton was convinced that these directions were sufficient to restore tarnished honour and reputation and thus to deter men from duelling. 'It now remaines', he concluded his treatise, 'that so many as shal conceiue themselues to be behinde in the least respect or point of Honour, seeke discreetly and aduisedly to repaire themselues in the *Marshals* Court, who are already thoroughly instructed and prepared, as well for the cleansing of all greene *Wounds*, as for the healing of olde *Vlcers* that shal appeare to them.'³¹¹

The idea that a court of honour would solve the problems of reputation in general and the earl of Northampton's plans to this effect in particular met with wide acceptance. One critic maintained that in order 'to nip the fruit whilst it is in the bud' it was necessary 'to punish words in a sharpe and severe manner, blowes in a more severe manner'.³¹² When Robert Ward offered his *Anima'dversions of warre* to Charles I in the critical moment in 1639, he gave a synopsis of Northampton's treatise as his solution to the problems of duelling.³¹³ When at the same time the Scottish covenanters were preparing themselves for war they not only ruled that 'no duell or combat shall be permitted to be foughten'; they also decided that a court of honour should take care of all inflicted injuries.³¹⁴ These comments, coming as they were from the 1630s, were

³⁰⁹ [Northampton], *A publication*, pp. 51–6. In 'Of a lie', p. 17, Northampton also suggested that the Earl Marshal's Court could imprison or fine freely anyone injuring his superior.

³¹⁰ [Northampton], 'Of a lie', in Gutch, *Collection*, pp. 16–17.

³¹¹ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 119. ³¹² Nashe, *Quaternio*, p. 142.

³¹³ Ward, *Anima'dversions of warre*, pp. 188–92.

³¹⁴ [Anon.], *Articles of militarie discipline* (Edinburgh, 1639), pp. 8–10.

highly apposite, for it was precisely during the period from 1633 to 1640 that the High Court of Chivalry was very active. The bulk of its more than 600 cases from this period related to 'scandalous words provocative of a duel'.³¹⁵

Northampton wholeheartedly endorsed the theory of honour and courtesy which underlay duelling. For him, as for the duellists giving the lie was the most serious insult – branding 'a Gentleman in the forehead with a marke of shame'.³¹⁶ Without adequate compensation the gentleman's honour remained tarnished. From this perspective it was not very surprising that Northampton was so importunate that even the slightest insult must be severely punished. William Wiseman concurred, writing that 'what is fit satisfaction for this lye giuen, or what for other disgraces; what is a iust repulse of a wrong, and when the burthen of honour is truely cast vpon the iniurer, your Marshals can tell best, who are best acquainted with this new disease. New maladies haue new medicines'.³¹⁷ He thus argued both that duelling was based on a misleading notion of honour and that a court of honour was needed to solve the quarrels of reputation. When the anonymous author of the *Duel-ease* exhorted Charles to adopt the policies his father had planned, he briefly regurgitated Northampton's ideas. If the ordinary law could not provide satisfaction, the gentleman should turn to 'the Marshals court', which could 'arraigne them, when the matter is scarce perceptible'.³¹⁸ He endorsed the court of honour whilst at the same time derided the trifling incidents which caused gentlemanly squabbles. Similarly, Walter Raleigh argued that giving the lie was neither offence nor insult. Yet, he agreed with Northampton that 'a marshal's court will easily give satisfaction' for affronts whether offered by 'words or blows'. Earl Marshal indeed had 'power to save every man's fame and reputation'.³¹⁹

If these critics came across as contradicting themselves the same cannot be said about Francis Bacon. To be sure, he maintained that the king should take 'vpon him the honor of all that tooke them selues grieved or interested for not hauing performed the Combat'. Thus, every man would 'think himselfe acquitted in his reputation, when . . . he shal see that the State takes his honor into their hands'.³²⁰ Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the main thrust of his argument was directed against Northampton's plans.

³¹⁵ Squibb 1959, pp. 56–61. ³¹⁶ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 55.

³¹⁷ Wiseman, *The Christian knight*, sig. T2^r. ³¹⁸ G. F., *Duel-ease*, sig. B1^{r–v}.

³¹⁹ Raleigh, *The history of the world*, in *The works*, iv, pp. 462–5.

³²⁰ Bacon, *The charge*, pp. 15, 43–4.

Bacon began by reminding his listeners that some have indeed objected that the English law 'hath not provided sufficient punishment, and reparations for contumely of words, as the Lie and the like'. But, Bacon retorted, this was complete nonsense. On the one hand, it was, as we have seen, nothing short of 'madnes' to think that a punishment was needed 'vppon the *lye given*'. On the other hand, if the insult was serious, the English law would of course discharge its duty. As Bacon put it, 'if there be extraordinary circumstances of despight and contumely, as in case of libells and bastanadoes, and the like, this Court [i.e. Star Chamber] taketh them in hand and punisheth them exemplary'.³²¹

Second, Bacon remained curiously silent about the solution Northampton had suggested – the High Court of Chivalry. In fact, he seems to have believed that there was no need for this court at all. We have already seen that, whereas Northampton suggested that duels fought overseas could only be punished in the High Court of Chivalry, Bacon maintained that Star Chamber could well proceed in these cases, because the planning of the duel had taken place in England. More importantly, his argument that in a case of a serious injury the law would perform its duty implied that there was no need for the High Court of Chivalry. In his original proposal for a proclamation Bacon did not mention this court at all. In *The charge touching duels* he specifically mentioned that 'the proceedings of the great and noble Commissioners Marshall, I honor and reverence much, & of them I speake not in any sort'.³²² But this self-imposed silence just served to emphasise the fact that Bacon clearly disagreed with those who wanted to use the High Court of Chivalry as a court of honour. In 1616 Bacon again stated that 'I spare to speak of anything whatsoever appertains to repair the honour or reputation of private persons', and suggested that the king had told him not to touch upon this issue. But, he said, he reserved 'the repairing of reputation' to 'my Lords, the great personages in commission touching martial affairs'.³²³

How much Bacon's silence hinged on the fact that he was a common lawyer is difficult to say.³²⁴ But his disparaging remarks that 'there were two lawes, one a kind of *Gownelaw*, and the other a law of *reputation*, as they tearme it', and that 'the year books and statute books must giue

³²¹ Ibid., p. 28. ³²² Ibid., p. 16. ³²³ Bacon, *Letters*, vi, pp. 110, 113.

³²⁴ In his schemes for a law reform Bacon was of course inclined to allow a stronger civil law influence on the English legal system, but he never thought to replace the common law by the civil law. For a brief discussion, see Peltonen 1996, pp. 22–3, and the works cited there. In the proclamation against reports or writings of duels, the king declared that anyone publishing 'any Discourse' on duelling should be judged in Star Chamber: *Stuart royal proclamations*, 1, p. 296.

place to some French and Italian pamphlets, which handle the doctrine of *Duells*,³²⁵ could have been directed as much against Northampton's plans for the court of honour and the laws it was supposed to execute as against duelling itself.

Most importantly, Bacon was suggesting that providing an alternative for duelling served only the contrary purpose. To establish a court of honour was tantamount to encouraging duelling. This was so because to establish such a court implied endorsing the theory of courtesy and honour which underlay duelling. The only remedy, Bacon argued, was that 'this euill bee noe more cockered [i.e. pampered], not the humor of it fed'. What was Bacon's point? How, in other words, could duelling be favoured? Bacon did not give a straight answer, but immediately after this passage he mentioned that he would remain silent about the Earl Marshal's court. The connection seems obvious. To establish a court of honour would amount to taking duelling theory seriously. And to do this would be equivalent to encouraging rather than suppressing duelling.

It followed, according to Bacon, that the only way in which duelling could be abolished was to discredit the underlying theory of courtesy and honour. When Northampton insisted that 'the Marshals Court' would help every gentleman who conceived himself 'to be behinde in the least respect or point of honour',³²⁶ such statements incurred Bacon's scornful ridicule. 'But', Bacon averred in a passage which I have already quoted,

I say the compounding of quarrells, which is other-wise in use, by priuate noble men and gentlemen, it is so punctuall, and hath such reference and respect vnto the receyued concepts, whats before hand, and whats behinde hand, and I cannot tel what, as without all question it doth, in a fashion, countenance and authorise this practise of *Duells*, as if it had in it some-what of right.³²⁷

In other words, the theory of civil courtesy, with its refined way of 'compounding of quarrells', was simply authorising duels. Later he repeated his contemptuous remarks, reiterating this same connection between the theory of courtesy and duelling: 'Nay I heare there be some Counsell learned of *Duells*, that tell yong men when they are before hand, and when they are otherwise, and thereby incense and incite them to the Duell, and make an art of it.'³²⁸ In 1616 he described Lord Ellesmere as 'a young duellist that findeth himself behind-hand'.³²⁹ The conclusion was as clear as it was inevitable: unless courtesy theory was totally

³²⁵ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 10.

³²⁶ [Northampton], *A publication*, p. 119.

³²⁷ Bacon, *The charge*, p. 16.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

³²⁹ Bacon to James I, 21 March 1616, *Letters*, v, p. 249.

degraded, there was no way in which duelling could be stopped. And because to set up a court of honour would entail courtesy theory, it would also corroborate and even strengthen rather than undermine duelling.

Bacon's boldness in expressing with disdain his sharp disagreement with Northampton (and thereby with the king) is magnified when one realises that he was speaking in front of an audience which of course included the earl of Northampton himself. Little wonder, then, that Bacon 'humbly' prayed that 'I may speake my mind freely, and yet be vnderstood aright', for he was not only questioning duelling. He was also arguing that the theory of courtesy and honour endorsed by Northampton and by the king was dangerous, for it encouraged duelling. And even more, he was further suggesting that Northampton and James's whole plan for a remedy was utterly wrong and useless. In the early eighteenth century John Cockburn surmised that this situation had amounted to an acrimonious dispute between the Earl Marshal's court and Star Chamber. According to Cockburn, Bacon had demonstrated in his *Charge* nothing less than 'the Ineffectualness' of the Earl Marshal's court in dealing with duelling and had pressed '*Star-Chamber* to interpose their extraordinary Power for curing an Evil'.³³⁰

The polarisation of Bacon's and Northampton's views was complete. Whereas Bacon thought that it was mad and fantastical to impose a punishment for lies, despising anyone proposing the contrary, Northampton was not only imposing severe punishments for lies. He even took the duellists' claims utterly seriously, confessing 'that great care and consideration is to be had, and many circumstances are to be enquired of, and looked into with a most sharp eye, and profound judgement: because matters of honour, and esteem of reputation, are of that value, as good men prize them higher than either life or living'.³³¹

The polarisation of opinions between Northampton and Bacon came to end in 1618 when a treatise appeared entitled *The peace-maker: or, Great Brittaines blessing*. The work came from the pen of Thomas Middleton, but the king took great interest in it, for it was licensed with his personal knowledge and approval. Every contemporary reader in fact would reasonably have taken it as coming from King James himself. No author's name appeared, but its bearing the royal arms, with the initials I. R. (Iacobus Rex) and 'Cum Privilegio' and its addressing 'all Our trueloving, and peace-embracing subjects' clearly suggested that the treatise

³³⁰ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 349–52. See also Peck 1995, pp. 105–6.

³³¹ [Northampton], 'Of a lie', in Gutch, *Collection*, p. 15.

conveyed royal opinion.³³² The tract first and foremost advocated international peace, but it seized the opportunity to denounce duelling as well. It stated that:

The Aggravation of small things, when a sparke shall grow to a flaming Beacon, a Word to a Wound, the Lye to a Life . . . Now the wise and understanding man is not subject or exposed to any of these Injuries whatsoever; neyther cares he, how many darts of Malice or Contumelie are shot against him, since he knowes, that he cannot be pierced . . . the heart of a wise man is solid, & hath gathered such invincible force, that he stands as secure from Injurie . . . So whatsoever injuries are attempted against a wise man, retorne without effect, and are to him but as Cold or Heat, Rain or Haile . . . And for words of Contumelie, it is held so small, and so sleight an injurie, as no wise man complaines, or revengeth himselfe for it: therefore, neither doe the Lawes themselues prefixe any penaltie therunto, not imagining that they would ever be burthensome.³³³

Whereas in 1614 the royal opinion was that any injury, whether verbal or real, deeply wounded a gentleman's reputation and that the accusation of lying was the worst insult, four years later the wise man was not merely exhorted to swallow every insult but was told that the accusation of lying was not an insult at all. Whereas in 1614 the royal view had stated that, of course, gentlemen ought to be hypersensitive of their honour and reputation, four years later the same view was held up to extreme ridicule. A notion of honour which took small insults seriously was now held to be completely fallacious. This 'opinion of Reputation', the tract asserted, was nothing but 'a Satanicall Illusion, and Apparition of Honour, against Religion, Law, Morall Vertue, and against all the honourable Presidents and Examples of the best Times, and valiantest Nations'.³³⁴ The reference to the 'valiantest Nations' clearly referred to the Romans and the Greeks, whose example had been irrelevant four years earlier. *The peace-maker*, in brief, meant a sharp volte-face in the royal opinion.

The peace-maker went on to argue that underlying the misleading notion of honour was an equally skewed view of valour. Indeed, gentlemen were said to have lost 'the true knowledge and understanding of Fortitude and Valour'. Paraphrasing Bacon's charge in Star Chamber, the tract argued that 'true Fortitude distinguished of the grounds of Quarrels' whether they be just and worthy. It also 'sets a better value upon mens lives then to bestow them idly; which are not so to bee trifled away, but offered

³³² Dunlap 1961. For Middleton's knowledge of duelling theory see Bowers 1937b.

³³³ [Middleton], *The peace-maker*, sigs. C3^v-4^v. ³³⁴ *Ibid.*, sig. D2^v.

up and sacrificed to Honourable Services, publike Merits, good Causes, and Noble Adventures'.³³⁵

In 1614 the royal treatise had argued that reputation was by far the most important thing for gentlemen. Four years later *The peace-maker* maintained that it was nothing short of 'Folly' that the 'Gentry' fixed 'their ayme and only end upon Reputation'.³³⁶ Whereas reputation was only 'another mans Opinion, and Opinion is no substance for thee to consist of', true honour was 'the Rumour of a beautifull and vertuous Action'.³³⁷ The royal opinion about honour had changed from a horizontal to a vertical one. In 1614 'the point of reputation' had guided gentlemen's lives. Now, four years later, the tract found that 'this punctualitie of Reputation is no better then a Bewitching Sorcerie'.³³⁸ Again it paraphrased Bacon:

But now the compounding of Quarrels is growne to a Trade: And as a most worthie Father of Law and Equitie speakes, there bee some Councell learned of Duells, that teach young Gentlemen, when they are before-hand, and when behind-hand, and thereby incense and incite them to the Duell, and make an Arte of it: the spurre & incitement false & erroneious imagination of Honor & Credit when most commonly those golden hopes end in a Halter.³³⁹

When Northampton was in charge of the royal pen even the slightest verbal discourtesies of 'the weight of one graine' were not merely extremely serious, but even demanded immediate reparation. Four years later, with the earl of Northampton in the grave and the whole Howard faction destroyed, the 'words of Contumelie', according to the royal opinion, were 'held so small, and so sleight an injurie, as no wise man complaines, or revengeth himselfe'. Even more, 'neither doe the Lawes themselves prefixe any penaltie therunto, not imagining that they would ever be burthensome'.³⁴⁰

Most importantly, the royal strategy to eradicate duelling seemed to have changed from the one upheld by Northampton to that favoured by Bacon. As we have seen, a main aim of the royal proclamation and the appended treatise in 1614 had been to replace duelling by a court of honour. Four years later *The peace-maker* said not a word about a court of honour. Instead, the only conceivable solution to duelling was a complete dismissal of the underlying theory of honour and valour. A gentleman, in short, was now advised simply to ignore or forbear injuries and insults. The tract, as we have already seen, insisted that 'the wise

³³⁵ Ibid., sig. D3^r.

³³⁶ Ibid., sig. D1^v.

³³⁷ Ibid., sigs. D3^r, D4^r.

³³⁸ Ibid., sig. D2^r.

³³⁹ Ibid., sig. D1^v.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., sig. C4^{r-v}.

and understanding man is not subject or exposed to any of these Injuries whatsoever'; the 'darts of Malice or Contumelie' could not pierce him. It further insisted that 'the heart of a wise man is solid, & hath gathered . . . invincible force', standing 'secure from Injurie'.³⁴¹

Thomas Middleton penned the tract, but whereas the guiding spirit of the royal views in 1614 had been the earl of Northampton – a 'Councell learned of Duells'[,], four years later the guiding spirit of the royal opinion was Northampton's rival Francis Bacon – 'a most worthie Father of Law and Equitie'.

This is not the end of the story, however, for there is an ironic footnote to it. In 1625 one Mr Colles and one Mr Matthew Francis fell out; the one affirmed that 'a hare was fair killed, and the other' that it was not. In such circumstances, 'words multiplied, and [even] some blows passed on either side'. Afterwards Mr Francis uttered 'divers threats and affronts' to Mr Colles, and finally 'sent him a letter of challenge', but Mr Colles 'refused to receive' it. At this point some local gentlemen had endeavoured to reconcile the squabble, but Mr Francis had refused all the attempts of reconciliation, and instead sued Mr Colles 'in the Earl Marshal's court'.

It was at this point that Bacon came in. He knew Mr Colles who now asked for his help. Of all people, Bacon wrote to the earl of Dorset, and asked him to move the earl of Arundel (the current Earl Marshal) 'to carry a favourable hand towards [Mr Colles], such as may stand with justice and the orders of that court'.³⁴²

There is a double irony here. First, no matter how much he had poked fun at the point of honour and no matter how vehemently he had argued against the Earl Marshal's court as a court of honour, Bacon now tried to influence the court's decision in a case involving the point of honour. Secondly, in doing so Bacon asked the earl of Dorset's help about duelling. Edward Sackville, the earl of Dorset was, of course, the most notorious duellist in Jacobean England and his killing of Lord Bruce of Kinloss in a duel in 1613 had prompted James, Northampton and Bacon to take action to abolish duelling.

³⁴¹ Ibid., sigs. C3^v–4^v.

³⁴² Bacon to the earl of Dorset, n.d. [1625], *Letters*, xiv, pp. 529–30.

*Duelling, civility and honour in Restoration
and Augustan England*

‘Thogh the *English*’, reflected one commentator in 1683, ‘have been accounted from all times, one of the most polite Nations of *Europe*, yet I am fully perswaded they have so far improved themselves in the Art of all civil Converse, since His Majesties Happy restoration, that if we compare them now, to what formerly they were, we shall have reason to wonder how so a great change to the better could happen in so short a time.’¹ This constant change of manners, the same commentator thought, made it ‘superfluous, or at least of little use to prescribe Rules or Ceremonies, that change not only every Age, but almost every Year’.²

Whilst these contentions are highly debatable, the more general idea which underlay them that civility and politeness occupied a central place in Restoration and Augustan England cannot be questioned. Although these themes had been widely discussed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, there is little doubt that after 1660 this discussion was even more vociferous. Many recent commentators have argued, as we saw in the Introduction, that these accounts of civility and politeness in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century introduced ‘a new definition of civility’, ‘new standards of conduct’ or ‘an explicitly innovative concept of social refinement – politeness’.³ In contrast to these arguments, I seek to show the striking similarities between the Restoration and Augustan concepts and those of the earlier period.⁴

Of course, there were some new developments. First, whereas in the Elizabethan period most treatises on civil courtesy had been translation from Italian or adaptations from Italian sources, a century later the scene was predominantly French and many of the treatises were translation

¹ D. A., *The whole art of converse* (London, 1683), p. 116. Cf. P[eter] B[ellon], *The mock-duellist, or the French vallet. A comedy* (London, 1675), sig. A3^r.

² D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 3.

³ Klein 1993b, pp. 77–9; Klein 1994, pp. 3–14; Carter 2001, pp. 1–2, 80; Shoemaker 1999, p. 137; Burke 2000; Gordon 1994; Brewer 1997, pp. 99–113.

⁴ Anna Bryson 1998 has emphasised these links as has Heal 1990, pp. 107, 391–2.

from French.⁵ Ferrand Spence, the translator of Trotti de La Chetardie's *Instructions for a young nobleman*, excused his labours by arguing that 'the French seem to have the most General Vogue'.⁶ Another and even more important development also started to emerge. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century courtesy and civility had always had its critics. These critics had questioned the validity of the whole culture of civility and had even poured ridicule on it. Whilst such criticism can be detected from the later period, it became much more attenuated. In its stead the concept of civility became multivocal and disputed. Many theorists of civility, in other words, make a vigorous attempt to redefine it and thus widen its scope. Whereas in the earlier period there had been relatively little disagreement about the proper definition of civility, after 1660, as we shall see, it became a highly contested notion.

As in the earlier period, so in Restoration and Augustan England the discourse of politeness provides us with the larger ideological context for the debate about duelling. From William Thomas onwards duelling had had a vital role in civility; it had always been taken as a chief promoter of civil courtesy. This close link between civility and duelling had also explained why it had been so imperative to some of the critics of duelling to refute the whole theory of courtesy. Many of the formulations of civility in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England rendered the defence of duelling possible. At the same time a wholly new, positive conception of duelling started to emerge. This novel formulation stressed the Englishness and Britishness of duelling and was in many ways a sharply contrasting account to the previous defences of duelling. Yet, even within it duelling eventually came to be legitimised, among other things, by its civilising powers.

THE RESTORATION OF COURTESY, CIVILITY AND POLITENESS

In Elizabethan and Jacobean England such words as courtesy and civil courtesy, civil conversation and civility had gained wide currency. In the later seventeenth century we still sometimes meet with the word 'courtesy', as in the tract which claimed to teach 'true Curtisie, Charity, Civility, and the Duty of Good Language',⁷ but much less frequently.

⁵ For the concomitant rise of the ideal of the *honnête homme* in France see e.g. Keohane 1980, pp. 283–9.

⁶ [Joachim Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions for a young nobleman: or, the idea of a person of honour*, transl. F[errand] S[pence] (London, 1683), sig. A4^r.

⁷ [Anon.], *Raillerie a la mode consider'd: or the supercilious detractor* (London, 1673), 'To the reader', no pagination.

Civility, meanwhile, had clearly been growing in popularity. In 1660 the heraldic writer Edward Waterhouse called the Inns of Court 'the Schools of Civility and Chivalry', and argued that men were polished partly by God and partly by nature 'to a more pleasing compliance with humanity and civil conversation'.⁸ When Obadiah Walker, a crypto-Catholic fellow of University College, Oxford, and its future master, explained the true way to educate young gentlemen in his popular treatise, he constantly referred to 'civility' and a 'civil person' as the desired goal. He began the second part of his treatise with 'Civility, as being the first to be learned and practised', claiming that 'the greatest Magnetismes in the World are Civility' and calling him who mastered this a 'civil person'.⁹ In a similar treatise entitled, *The compleat gentleman*, Jean Gailhard pointed out that 'as Children in their generation are to be members of a politick body, and of a civil society; I wish they were fitted to keep the bond of it, and therefore taught the practice of meekness, humility, civility'.¹⁰ The growing popularity of the terms civility and civil conversation is most readily obvious in the new translation of Della Casa's *Galateo*. In his loose translation, Nathaniel Waker added these words where none existed in either the original or the earlier English translation.¹¹

At the same time, however, another term started to be used and by the turn of the century it was as popular as civility. This was of course 'politeness' imported from French. Antoine de Courtin promised to explain 'that Politness and Concinnity of behaviour, which is so laudably requisite in a well-bred man'.¹² In Madeleine de Scudéry's *Conversations upon several subjects* published in English in 1683 it was stressed that 'the Conversation' must be 'influenced, with a certain spirit of Politeness'.¹³ Whereas in 1695 the French Huguenot Abel Boyer discussed 'Conversation, Society, Civility', a year earlier he had already written about 'Of Politeness, of Manners or Civility, and Decency'. In 1702 he composed

⁸ Edward Waterhouse, *A discourse and defence of arms and armory* (London, 1660), pp. 134, 210.

⁹ [Obadiah Walker], *Of education especially of young gentlemen* (Oxford, 1673), pp. 209, 225, 211.

¹⁰ Jean Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman: or directions for the education of youth* (Savoy, 1678), pp. 87, 56–8; Antoine de Courtin, *The rules of civility*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1671), sig. A3^v; all references are to the first edition, unless otherwise stated. See Heltzel 1928.

¹¹ Giovanni Della Casa, *The refu'd courtier*, translated N[athaniel] W[aker] (London, 1663), pp. 20, 33, 42–3, 81, 157; Della Casa, *Galateo* (Milan, 1988), pp. 10, 14, 17; Della Casa, *Galateo* (1576), p. 9, 16, 19. Waker acknowledged this in his preface, sig. [A8^r]; John Macqueen, *An essay on honour* (London, 1711), p. 146.

¹² Courtin, *The rules of civility*, p. 1.

¹³ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Conversations upon several subjects*, trans. Ferrand Spence (London, 1683), p. 19. For Scudéry see Gordon 1994, pp. 107–11.

about 'Conversation, Society, Civility, Politeness', insisting that 'the knowledge of Courtesie and good Manners, is a very necessary Study'.¹⁴ A few years earlier there had appeared an entire treatise (translated from French) under the title *The polite gentleman*, where the terms 'politeness' and 'polite' were constantly used.¹⁵ By the time Joseph Addison and Richard Steele wrote *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* this new term was thus well established. Addison and Steele occasionally employed the term civility, but used the concepts politeness, 'the Polite World' and 'a Polite Genius' with complete ease.¹⁶ Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, also constantly employed the terms 'polite' and 'politeness'.¹⁷

The words could change, but the notions of courtesy and civility, civil conversation and politeness had many things in common. Some historians have emphasised the distinctive character of the new terms.¹⁸ Yet, if contemporary dictionaries are anything to go by, the terms 'civility' and 'courtesy' were perceived more or less as synonyms. Many of the definitions were thus dangerously circular. John Kersey defined 'Civility as 'courtesy' and 'Courtesy' as 'civility'; *Glossographia Anglicana* (1707) did not have an entry for civility but defined to 'Civilize' as 'to make Courteous and Tractable' and 'Courtesie' as 'the same with Civility, is a kind and obliging Behaviour and Management of one's self'.¹⁹ And many later dictionaries followed suit.²⁰

It should therefore come as no surprise that there were striking similarities between the sixteenth-century notions of courtesy and civil conversation on the one hand and the late seventeenth-century notions of civility and politeness on the other. The social context for the discussions

¹⁴ Abel Boyer, *Characters of the virtues & vices of the age: or moral reflections, maxims, and thoughts upon men and manners* (London, 1695), pp. 25–9; Abel Boyer, *The compleat French-master, for ladies and gentlemen* (London, 1694), part II.4, pp. 31–5; Abel Boyer, *The English Theophrastus: or, the manners of the age* (London, 1702), pp. 101–10. The word had appeared in the form of 'politiness' already in Courtin's *The rules of civility*, pp. 1, 5. In the dedication of Trotti de La Chetardie's *Instructions for young noblemen*, sigs. A3^v–4^r, Ferrand Spence used the word 'Politeness'.

¹⁵ [Anon.], *The polite gentleman; or, reflections upon the several kinds of wit, viz. in conversation, books, and affairs of the world* transl. [anon.: Henry Baker?] (London, 1700).

¹⁶ *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond (5 vols., Oxford, 1965), no. 103, I, p. 429; no. 112, I, p. 460; no. 126, II, p. 2; no. 409, III, pp. 527–9.

¹⁷ Klein 1994; James Miller, *Of politeness. An epistle* (London, 1738), p. 4. See also Cowan 1998.

¹⁸ Klein 1994, pp. 3–14; Langford 1997; Brewer 1997, pp. 99–100; Cohen 1996. Carter 2001, pp. 22–3, disagrees.

¹⁹ J[ohn] K[ersey], *A new English dictionary* (London, 1702); John Kersey, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum: or, a general English dictionary* (London, 1708); [anon.], *Glossographia Anglicana nova: or, a dictionary* (London, 1707). For an earlier example of equating 'Courtesie' and 'Civility' see R[ichard] H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus: or the art of wheedling, or insinuation* (London, 1675), p. 46.

²⁰ Bailey, *An universal etymological English dictionary*; Gordon, *Dictionarium Britannicum*; Thomas Dyche, *A new general English dictionary*, 2nd edn (London, 1737); Benj[amin] Martin, *Lingua Britannica reformata: or, a new universal English dictionary* (London, 1754).

of civility and politeness was urban gentlemanly society. But the social world these discussions were said to describe included not only the city but also the court; the intended audience was thus the urban gentleman in general and the courtier in particular. Dedicating his translation of *Galateo* to the duke of Monmouth, Waker argued that the work was intended for all 'Gallants' and 'especially of the choicest part, the Courtier'.²¹ Antoine de Courtin's *The rules of civility* was catering for the same audience.²² Edward Hyde insisted that 'the Court is the Place where Men may learn the best Manners'. But he also pointed out that the polite world was wider than the court; 'the Inns of Court', he wrote, 'were always looked upon as the Suburbs of the Court it self'.²³ Gailhard was convinced that even though the courtier could not guarantee his personal success in the court, at the very least 'it doth Polish and Civilize him'.²⁴ In *The falshood of human virtue* (published in English in 1671) Jacques Esprit wrote that politeness was 'no where to be found but at Court',²⁵ and essentially the same point was emphasised in Saint-Evremond's writings and La Bruyère's *The characters* (first published in English in 1699).²⁶ 'The art of complaisance' was the art of those who spent much time in court,²⁷ and even Steele and Addison could link politeness and courts closely together.²⁸

What needs emphasis, however, is the fact that the court and the city were, if not the same place, closely associated with one another and were mutually contrasted against the country. One author enquired in 1650 'which life is more to be desired, the life of a Courtier or a Citizen, or a solitary life in the Countrey'.²⁹ 'As to Countrey breeding,' Jean Gailhard wrote, 'which is opposed to the Courts, to the Cities, or to Travelling; when it is meerly such, it is a clownish one.'³⁰ In Vaumorière's *The art of pleasing in conversation* (first published in English in 1691) politeness and

²¹ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, sig. A3^v. ²² Courtin, *The rules of civility*, sig. A3^{r-v}.

²³ Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, 'A dialogue . . . concerning education', in Clarendon, *A collection of several tracts* (London, 1727), pp. 313–48, at pp. 327, 331.

²⁴ Jean Gailhard, *Two discourses* (London, 1682), pp. 132–3.

²⁵ [Jacques Esprit], *The falshood of human virtue. A moral essay*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1691), p. 187.

²⁶ Charles de Marquetel de Saint-Denis, seigneur de Saint-Evremond, *The works of Mr de St. Evremond*, transl. [anon.] (2 vols., London, 1700), I, p. 426; Jean de La Bruyère, *The characters, or the manners of the age*, transl. by several hands, 3rd edn (London, 1702), pp. 143–4.

²⁷ S. C., *The art of complaisance or the meane to oblige in conversation* (London, 1673), p. 3. The book owes something to Du Refuge's *A treatise of the court*, see Ustick 1929a; Ustick 1929b; Anna Bryson 1998, p. 38.

²⁸ See *The Spectator*, no. 263, II, pp. 522–3; no. 467, IV, p. 151; Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, ed. James Leheny (Oxford, 1979), no. VII, p. 66.

²⁹ [Anon.], *The mirror of complements. Or a manuall of choice*, 4th edn (London, 1650), pp. 180–4.

³⁰ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt II, p. 3.

civility were equally linked with the court and the city.³¹ The closeness of the court and the city is graphically attested by Boyer's *The English Theophrastus*, which, as the subtitle declared, described 'the modern characters of the court, the town, and the city'.³² *The Spectator* was aimed at both 'City, Court, or Country', but the guiding principle of the whole journal was that 'Men of a politer conversation' were to be found in London. It comes as no surprise therefore that 'a Country Gentleman' is habitually contrasted to 'a Courtier, or Town-Gentleman'.³³ The same is true in Swift's *Polite conversation* (1738), which sharply juxtaposed the uncouth country gentleman with those who dwell in the city and the court.³⁴

In the late seventeenth century, just as a century earlier, the theory of civility contained a tension between an inherently hierarchical structure of gentlemanly society and a demand for equality underlying the entire theory of civility.³⁵ Sometimes the aim of politeness was said to be pleasing someone above you – your patron or prince. This was so especially in treatises whose aim was to describe the courtier's ideal comportment. When Jacques de Callières declared in *The courtier's calling*, originally published in 1664 as *La fortune des gens de qualité* and translated into English in 1675, that 'the greatest secret is to render himself agreeable, to use complaisance, and be diligent, and very expert', he carefully added that this was so 'in those Exercises in which' the prince 'chiefly delights'.³⁶ But the discourse of 'Courtesy and Civility' was, as Clement Ellis pointed out in 1660, a year before he became the chaplain to the marquis of Newcastle, chiefly for 'equals'.³⁷ Of course, 'the quality, wealth or merit' of a gentleman should be carefully taken into account, but most gentlemen were by and large equal.³⁸ In *The gentlemen's companion* by William Ramesey (a physician and astrologer), the entire discussion of civility and politeness was placed in a chapter entitled 'Equals'.³⁹ In Vaumorière's

³¹ [Pierre d'Ortigue, sieur de Vaumorière], *L'art de plaire dans la conversation* [-] *The art of pleasing in conversation*, transl. [anon.] (1691) (London, 1707), pp. 19, 35. This was a facing-page edition. Vaumorière was a prolific author and a close friend of Madeleine de Scudéry.

³² [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, title-page.

³³ *The Spectator*, no. 34, I, pp. 144–5; no. 126, II, p. 2; no. 240, II, pp. 423–4; no. 394, III, p. 478.

³⁴ Jonathan Swift, *Polite conversation* (1738), ed. Eric Partridge (London, 1963), pp. 33–6.

³⁵ France 1992, pp. 63–4.

³⁶ [Jacques de Callières], *The courtier's calling: shewing the ways of making a fortune, and the art of living at court, according to the maxims of policy & morality*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1675), p. 23.

³⁷ C[lement] E[llis], *The gentle sinner, or, England's brave gentleman* (Oxford, 1660), p. 124. See also Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 169–71; Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, I, pp. 56–7; [Courtin], *The rules of civility. Newly revised and much enlarged*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1678), pp. 257–8, 278.

³⁸ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 146–7.

³⁹ [William Ramesey], *The gentlemen's companion: or, a character of true nobility and gentility: in the way of essay* (London, 1672), pp. 70–86.

The art of pleasing in conversation it was argued that a gentleman had to be extraordinarily polite towards a man of 'considerable Rank'. Nevertheless, it was immediately added in the dialogue that civility and politeness were of hardly less importance in conversations with 'our Equals'.⁴⁰

No matter whether it was called civility, civil conversation or politeness, it was thought again to embrace both verbal and non-verbal communication – both words and deeds. As one writer put it, 'a Civil Conversation may be taken either as related to our Actions, or to our Discourse'.⁴¹ This conviction that civility and politeness consisted of both speech and other forms of action was endlessly rehearsed. Courtin defined civility as '*A science in instructing how to dispose all our words and actions in their proper and true places.*'⁴² Similarly, the author of *The art of complaisance* pointed out that the art he was going to describe and analyse regulated both 'our words and behaviour', whilst Richard Head defined that 'Civility' was 'most observable in these four things, Cloaths, Countenance, Words, and Actions'.⁴³ Boyer also concluded that politeness dealt with 'all our Words and Actions'.⁴⁴ And Morvan de Bellegarde, the most prolific author of guides to politeness in the age of Louis XIV, concurred; politeness, he wrote in *Reflexions upon ridicule*, originally published in 1698 and translated into English in 1706, is about 'whatever you say or do'.⁴⁵ Just as in the sixteenth century, it was widely agreed that conversation had a central place in the culture of gentlemanly civility and politeness. Civil conversation was thus a chief preoccupation and occupation of a polite gentleman, and numerous treatises were composed with the view of explaining its intricacies.

There is hardly any need to belabour the point that civility and politeness concerned sociability. Sometimes civility was taken to mean simply the skills of general sociability and of getting on in life. This was what Madeleine de Scudéry called general civility: 'when we are exposed to the World, and know the way of living in't, we have a certain Universal

⁴⁰ [Vaumorière], *The art of pleasing*, pp. 181–5. See also D. A., *The whole art of converse*, pp. 26–7, 42–3; Boyer, *The compleat French-master*, p. 33.

⁴¹ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 3. See in general France 1992, pp. 55–6.

⁴² Courtin, *The rules of civility*, p. 6. See also [Esprit], *The falshood*, pp. 187–8.

⁴³ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, p. 2; H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, p. 43; Charles Marquetel de Saint-Denis, seigneur de Saint-Evremond, *Miscellany essays upon philosophy, history, poetry, morality, humanity, gallantry*, &c., II, translated Mr Brown (London, 1694), p. 164.

⁴⁴ Boyer, *The compleat French-master*, p. 32.

⁴⁵ Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule; or what it is that makes a man ridiculous; and the means to avoid it*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1706), p. 16. For Bellegarde see Gordon 1994, pp. 95–100. Vaumorière spoke about the 'Complaisance of Action' and 'the Complaisance of Words', *The art of pleasing*, pp. 291–3. See also [William Winstanley], *The new help to discourse*, 3rd edn (London, 1684), pp. 285–9.

Civility'.⁴⁶ According to this definition, civility, or more specifically civil conversation, was thought to mean simple socialisation – jolly and happy coming together. Samuel Crossman, a former nonconformist who became one of the king's chaplains, wrote in 1664 that 'Civil Conversation' meant that the young man went 'into *Civill Society* amongst men, where very much of the comfort and sweetness of life depends upon our mutual acquitting our selves each to other in the good offices of Vertue and Humanity'.⁴⁷ Another writer argued that 'the Necessities of Life are not the sole Reasons of Men's Conversing with one another'. Bare life was not enough, he argued, but 'we must likewise have those things which may serve to make it happy'. It was above all 'the Pleasure of Conversation' which 'chiefly contributes to this Happiness'.⁴⁸ Richard Steele also thought that the idea of conversation embraced general sociability. He wrote in *The Spectator* that 'that part of Life which we ordinarily understand by the Word Conversation, is an Indulgence to the Sociable Part of our Make, and should incline us to bring our proportion of good Will or good Humour among the Friends we meet with'.⁴⁹

Just as in the case of the original concept of civil conversation, the chief role of civility and politeness in shaping human sociability was to provide rules for agreeable behaviour and thus for pleasing one's company. At the crux of civility was thus the idea of pleasantness. It was said again and again that the main aim of civility and civil conversation was not only sociability but also, and more specifically, the ability to please those with whom we conversed. Civility, argued Nathaniel Waker in his preface to his translation of Della Casa's *Galateo*, amounted to 'a courteous and comely behaviour'.⁵⁰ Antoine de Courtin defined civility as 'nothing but a certain modesty and pudor required in all our actions', the aim being the acquisition of 'politness' and 'agreeableness'.⁵¹ Yet another originally French treatise exhorted the young nobleman to embrace qualities which would 'render him pleasant and grateful', and the author Richard Head emphasised exactly the same point in *Proteus Redivivus*.⁵²

In John Locke's *Some thoughts concerning education* (first published in 1693) civility also had a central place. Locke's definition of civility was entirely familiar. It was not only important to have 'a disposition of the Mind

⁴⁶ Scudéry, *Conversations*, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Samuel Crossman, *The young mans monitor* (London, 1664), p. 58.

⁴⁸ [Anon.], *The polite gentleman*, pp. 4–5; [Esprit], *The falshood*, pp. 90–1.

⁴⁹ *The Spectator*, no. 143, II, p. 65; cf. also *The Tatler*, ed. Donald F. Bond (3 vols., Oxford, 1987), no. 225, III, p. 172.

⁵⁰ Della Casa, *The refn'd courtier*, sig. A6^r. ⁵¹ Courtin, *The rules of civility*, p. 5.

⁵² [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, p. 11; H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 37–42.

not to offend others'. It was equally crucial to have 'the most acceptable, and agreeable way of expressing that Disposition'. The aim of civility was thus 'to supple the natural stiffness and so soften Mens Tempers that they may bend to a compliance and accomodate themselves to those they have to do with'. The most brutal 'Incivility' was 'not to mind what pleases or displease those he is with'.⁵³

Civility and politeness were a refined sociability, stressing the need to conform one's conduct and manners to those with whom one socialised.⁵⁴ The author of *The art of complaisance* claimed that his art was so powerful that it could calm 'the displeasures of tyrants' and disarm 'the fury of our enemies'. According to his definition, civility consisted of two things: 'one is a certain decency or sweet behaviour to which we ought to conform our selves as much as possible, the other is an agreeable affability'. It was especially this latter skill which would be in great demand since 'it renders us not onely accessable to all those, who would address themselves to us, but also make our society and conversation desirable'.⁵⁵

When the word civility began to be replaced by politeness the definitions remained constant. Abel Boyer defined politeness as 'the Art of pleasing in Company' or 'a mixture of Civility, Decency, Discretion, and Complaisance, accompanied with a gentle and pleasant Air'.⁵⁶ Morvan de Bellegarde's definition was very similar: 'Politeness being a Combination of Discretion, Civility, Complaisance, Circumspection, and Modesty, accompanied with a agreeable Air'.⁵⁷

Amongst the best-known writers of civility and politeness were of course Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. It is hardly any news that in both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* as well as in their other literary output the themes of politeness, civility and conversation were always at the core. They were convinced that there had been a steady progress of civility – or civilising process – in the history of humankind. Even a quick look 'into the Manners of the most remote Ages of the World' revealed 'Human Nature in her Simplicity'. It followed that 'the more

⁵³ John Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford, 1989), pp. 200–1.

⁵⁴ The term 'a refined sociability' is borrowed from Klein 1994, p. 4. See also Carter 2001, pp. 20–2.

⁵⁵ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 5, 31.

⁵⁶ Boyer, *The English Theophrastus*, p. 106; Boyer, *The compleat French-master*, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule* p. 13. See also Jonathan Swift, 'On good-manners and good-breeding', in *The prose works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford, 1957), IV, pp. 211–18, at p. 213; Miller, *Of politeness*, p. 4. See also Anne Thérèse de Marguenat de Courcelles, marquise de Lambert, *Advice of a mother to her son and daughter*, transl. [anon.] (London, n.d. [1732?]), pp. 19–20.

we come downward towards our own Times', the more we 'may observe her hiding herself in Artifices and Refinements, Polished insensibly out of her Original Plainness, and at length entirely lost under Form and Ceremony, and (what we call) Good-breeding'.⁵⁸ There might have been some nostalgia for simple manners in this passage but there is little doubt that both Addison and Steele firmly believed in the politeness and civility of their own age. Their whole project was directed to 'the polite or busy Part of Mankind'.⁵⁹ Although they were convinced that their contemporaries were witnessing a steady increase in the overall level of civility, much could still be done. Human society was still full of disturbances 'of which there is yet no Remedy', and in *The Tatler* they even promised to 'publish Tables of Respect and Civility', which would instruct people in conducting themselves with different kinds of people.⁶⁰

Another equally well-known author of politeness was John Locke's former pupil, the third earl of Shaftesbury. As Lawrence Klein has argued, at the core of Shaftesbury's ideological project for moral and cultural improvement was his adaptation and reconstruction of ideas of politeness. Of course Shaftesbury's project was much wider than mere inculcation of polite manners and agreeable conversation. Yet, his conception of politeness was in many ways conventional. On the most general level Shaftesbury can be seen as a philosopher of sociability; he strongly argued for innate sociability, noting that 'whoever is unsociable and voluntarily shuns society or commerce with the world must of necessity be morose and ill-natured'.⁶¹ Humankind could be naturally sociable, but Shaftesbury directed his project at gentlemen – at the 'gentlemen of fashion' or simply 'the fashionable world'.⁶²

For Shaftesbury, as for countless others, politeness meant agreeable and pleasing, 'soft and harmonious' behaviour in company. The underlying assumption was that 'whatever company we keep' we could expect 'their characters' to be 'polite and agreeable'.⁶³ Although good manners played a part in the culture of politeness, a polite conversation was its epitome. According to Shaftesbury, men should 'search and study of the highest politeness in modern conversation'.⁶⁴ Shaftesbury's definition of politeness rehearsed familiar themes: 'Whoever has any impression of

⁵⁸ *The Spectator*, no. 209, II, p. 318; see also no. 255, II, p. 490.

⁵⁹ *The Tatler*, no. 186, III, p. 10.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 215, III, p. 130. See in general Carter 2001, pp. 60–8.

⁶¹ Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of men, manners, opinions, times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 215, 43.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 62, 78.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, e.g. pp. 246, 153, 397, 408, 457–8; Klein 1999, p. xii.

⁶⁴ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 405.

what we call gentility or politeness is already so acquainted with the decorum and grace of things that he will readily confess a pleasure and enjoyment in the very survey and contemplation of this kind.’⁶⁵ Moreover, Shaftesbury harped on the model politeness of classical Athens. The ancient Athenians had been ‘that sole polite, most civilized and accomplished nation’; they had been ‘indisputable masters and superiors . . . in all science, wit, politeness and manners’.⁶⁶

In formulating their definitions of conversation, the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century authors had much in common with their predecessors.⁶⁷ Just as in the late sixteenth century when the concept of civil conversation had come to England for the first time, so a century later the main emphasis in the definitions of civil conversation was placed on its agreeable nature. *The whole art of converse*, published in 1683, exhorted the reader ‘to conform our Discourse to the inclinations of those [with whom] we Converse’. The only way, the anonymous author wrote, we can be ‘agreeable to those we Converse’ was to ‘study with all diligence, their humours’ and to ‘sound their inclinations’.⁶⁸ When Vaumorière defined conversation in *The art of pleasing in conversation*, he put his whole emphasis on two words – ‘agreeableness and diversion’; ‘Our principal design’, one of the interlocutors insisted, ‘is to please in the Conversation of the World.’ This pleasantness and agreeableness were crucially important in shaping gentlemen’s conversation. First, the gentleman had to be careful in choosing his words so that they ‘please the Ear’ and ‘have Sweetness, or Magnificence’. Second, his speech should contain ‘beauty of Expressions and lively Descriptions’.⁶⁹

Exactly the same emphasis on the centrality of agreeableness and pleasantness in conversation was taken for granted by all those who wrote about the gentlemanly culture of polite conversation. Obadiah Walker argued that the courtier was an ideal model for everyone interested in attaining civility. A courtier, he pointed out, was an exceptional character, because his ‘interest complies with everyone’; he was ‘alwaies gay, cheerfull and complaisant, without any humour of his own, onely borrowing that of the company’. ‘Every civil person’, Walker thought, should imitate such a model.⁷⁰ ‘Conversation’, *The polite gentleman* announced,

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 414.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 397, 405; see also pp. 371, 405, 435; Klein 1994, pp. 41–7. For his juxtaposition between the ancient and modern worlds see *Characteristics*, pp. 118, 120, 157–9.

⁶⁷ For the eighteenth century see Warren 1983. ⁶⁸ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 57.

⁶⁹ [Vaumorière], *The art of pleasing*, pp. 5–7, 267–9, 45, 67.

⁷⁰ [Walker], *Of education*, p. 211.

'creates those agreeable Ties which bind us one to the other.'⁷¹ And Richard Head maintained that 'since Men by Nature are addicted to Conversation', everyone must know how to 'please' and how to 'apparel himself with the affections of them he converseth withal'.⁷²

The first maxim in the polygraph Laurent Bordelon's *The management of the tongue* (published in English in 1706) was that 'Conversation improves Learning, and makes it agreeable', and this assumption underlay the entire treatise.⁷³ For Addison and Steele, in civil or polite conversation our main aim was to please other conversationalists – the rule was simply to be 'Agreeable in Conversation'.⁷⁴ There was 'one great general Rule', they declared in *The Tatler*, 'to be observed in all Conversations, which is this, That Men should not talk to please themselves, but those that hear them'.⁷⁵ And in *The Spectator* they announced: 'It ought certainly to be the first point to be aimed at in Society, to gain the good Will of those with whom you converse.'⁷⁶ According to Shaftesbury, in conversing with other men, the aim was to 'find pleasure in it', to 'render such speculative conversations any way agreeable'. It was 'the agreeableness of expression' that could 'charm the public ear and . . . incline the heart'.⁷⁷

If pleasing one's interlocutors was regarded as vital, it is hardly surprising that many writers strongly exhorted their readers to shun all disputes and arguments in their conversations. It was obvious that disagreements and disputes were not exactly the best ways to please one's conversants. Waker pointed out that one of 'the most ridiculous follies' was 'to oppose almost every thing that is asserted'.⁷⁸ The author of *The whole art of converse* recommended avoiding 'the Spirit of Contradiction', while Gailhard argued that the tutor must look to it that before young noblemen were 'to be admitted into company and conversation' they had learned how to 'forbear disputing, and too much contradicting what others say'.⁷⁹ Head insisted that if a gentleman aimed at pleasure in conversation, 'his words' must be 'very pleasant, and always like blancht Almonds set in white Sugar'. He must never be 'polemical, or opposing' but instead always 'yielding, obliging' and 'concluding with what every one

⁷¹ [Anon.], *The polite gentleman*, p. 8. ⁷² H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, p. 137.

⁷³ [Laurent Bordelon], *The management of the tongue*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1706), pp. 1, 3–5.

⁷⁴ *The Tatler*, no. 4, i, p. 44. ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 264, iii, p. 337.

⁷⁶ *The Spectator*, no. 422, iii, pp. 582–3.

⁷⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 33, 107. See also [John Constable], *The conversation of gentlemen considered in most of the ways, that make their mutual company agreeable, or disagreeable* (London, 1738), see especially pp. 24–8.

⁷⁸ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 177–8.

⁷⁹ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 24; Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt i, pp. 88–9, pt ii, pp. 77–80.

says, *it is right indeed*'.⁸⁰ Scudéry laid it down that 'the principal rule' was 'never to say any thing that contradicts the Judgment'. It was an obvious 'incivility not to hearken to what is said . . . and to slight all the rest of the Company we are engaged in'.⁸¹ The same rule underlay Bellegarde's notion on civil conversation. 'But of all,' he asserted, 'those are the most troublesome, who will be always Contradicting, and who immediately declare themselves against what others advance.'⁸²

Sometimes, however, an occasion could arise when the gentleman was forced to disagree with his interlocutors. In such a case, he had to muster all his politeness and sweeten his words as much as he could. 'When we have reason to Contradict any,' one author wrote, we must avoid all 'roughness, sharpness or obstinacy' and 'sweeten it as much as we can by humble terms and expressions'.⁸³ But in order to avoid altogether these thorny situations, the gentleman should choose the topics of his conversations with utmost care. It was an obvious mistake, as one author pointed out, 'to change familiar Discourses and common Conversation into Philosophical Conferences, or Schools of Learning'. Indeed, 'any thing that savours of Instruction is offensive in Conversation'. This was so, the author asserted, because 'the Minds of *beau Monde*' were 'always more Sensible than Reasonable'.⁸⁴

Given the fact that civil conversation was an essential part of the polite culture of gentlemen, it sharply contrasted with two other forms of verbal communication. First, civil conversation was juxtaposed to scholarly debates in general and university learning in particular.⁸⁵ *The art of complaisance* drew a sharp distinction between the 'pedantry and a humour of contention' of scholars and the 'mildness and modesty' of gentlemen.⁸⁶ Another author noted that 'the Spirit of Contradiction' is a particular error of 'young and unexperien'd Schollars' who would 'undertake to prove every thing by a *Sillogism in form*, or an Argument in *mode and figure*'. This 'Pedantick Air' was 'opposite to Civility' and could be eliminated in conversing 'with the judicious sort'.⁸⁷ Jean Gailhard similarly argued that in order to become 'compleat', a gentleman had to

⁸⁰ H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 40, 43. ⁸¹ Scudéry, *Conversations*, pp. 18–19, 114–15.

⁸² Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, p. 16.

⁸³ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 83–4. The author also argued that these rules only applied to equals. A very similar rule was laid down by Callières, *The courtier's calling*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ [Anon.], *The polite gentleman*, pp. 74, 103. Cf. Baldwin 2001, p. 356.

⁸⁵ France 1992, pp. 56–7; Copley 1995, p. 67.

⁸⁶ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, sigs. A3^v–A4^v. See also [Walker], *Of education*, II, pp. 14–16.

⁸⁷ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 25; [William Darrell], *A gentleman instructed in the conduct of a virtuous and happy life*, 2nd edn (London, 1704), p. 27; [Vaumorière], *The art of pleasing*, p. 227.

'leave off that jarring and wrangling humor, which usually is gotten in the Schools, whereby they gain-say every thing others speak; they hear others . . . but only to contradict'.⁸⁸ Shaftesbury wholly concurred with these injunctions. 'The mere amusements of gentlemen', he declared, 'are found more improving than the profound researches of pedants'.⁸⁹

Secondly, and closely related to the critique of university learning, an adept civil conversationalist was urged to keep in mind the clear-cut (and ultimately Ciceronian) distinction between civil conversation and rhetoric. To be sure, it was sometimes argued that 'Rhetorical Speech' was 'sweet, pleasant, curteous language'.⁹⁰ But many an author of civil conversation contrasted rather than equated conversation and rhetoric. At the very outset of her treatise of conversation, Scudéry distinguished conversation from rhetoric. 'A Lawyer pleading a Cause at the Barr; a Merchant negotiating with another; a General of an Army giving Orders; a King speaking of Affairs of State in His Council: all this is not what ought to be stiled Conversation.' These 'People may discourse well of their Interests, and Affairs', but they lacked that crucial component which defined conversation – 'that agreeable talent of Conversation', as Scudéry put it. Trotti de La Chetardie also contrasted conversation and orations, claiming that the former 'is not of the nature of Harangues and Speeches'. Conversation 'ought neither', he revealingly argued, 'to be too eloquent and florid, nor too starch and studied', but must 'turn upon indifferent matters'.⁹¹

Again Shaftesbury presented a similar sharp contrast between conversation and rhetoric. 'In matter of reason', he wrote, 'more is done in a minute or two by way of question and reply than a continual discourse of whole hours. Orations are fit only to move the passions, and the power of declamation is to terrify, exalt, ravish or delight rather than satisfy or instruct.' Such orations turned out to be both highly impolite and disagreeable. As Shaftesbury put it, 'to be confined to hear orations on certain subjects must needs give us a distaste and render the subjects so managed as disagreeable as the managers'.⁹²

⁸⁸ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt II, p. 29.

⁸⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 148; Klein 1999, pp. xiii, xxi. Shaftesbury also contrasted Christianity with its disputes to politeness, p. 161.

⁹⁰ Henry Whiston, *A short treatise of the great worth and best kind of nobility* (London, 1661), p. 4. [John Gough], *The academy of complements*, 4th edn (London, 1641), the preface; [anon.], *The mirrour of complements*, sig. A3^{r-v}.

⁹¹ Scudéry, *Conversations*, pp. 1–2; [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, pp. 22–3.

⁹² Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 34. But see also pp. 106–7 where rhetorical persuasion and 'the agreeableness of expression' were equated rather than contrasted; Klein 1994, pp. 44–6, 201, emphasises this link.

Formal schooling in general and university education in particular could be downright detrimental to civil conversation. Trotti de La Chetardie emphasised that 'the knowledge of the World' was of much greater importance than the knowledge reaped from books.⁹³ Saint-Evremond claimed that the difference between 'a Polite and a Learned Person' was greater than the difference between 'a learned and an ignorant Man'. In the world of polite gentlemen, he went on, 'we prefer the Discourse of an ignorant Flatterer, before the Conversation of a learned Man, when he is morose and severe'.⁹⁴ 'To what purpose', Callières asked, 'do his Greek and Latine serve, but to render him ridiculous among accomlisht persons, and make them profess that he is more ignorant in the knowledge of the World, than the most stupid are in that of the University?'⁹⁵ To gain a deep understanding in the knowledge of the world was the best way to attain precisely those qualities which were said to be the most important assets of an accomplished gentleman. Such knowledge 'polishes our discourse and our Manners, which renders us discreet in our conversations, and agreeable to the whole World'.⁹⁶

The keen interest in civility evinced by these commentators raises the obvious question of its function in gentlemanly society. If there was a striking degree of continuity in the definitions of civility from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, there was an equally close resemblance in the conceptions of the ultimate aims of civility and politeness. The Restoration writers of civility and politeness agreed with their predecessors that the ultimate aim of civility and politeness and thus of gentlemen's agreeable and pleasant behaviour was nothing less than winning a favourable response from other gentlemen. Agreeable behaviour ensured that a gentleman became 'exceedingly loved by all'.⁹⁷ The aim of 'complaisance' was, as one writer pointed out, to 'engage the love and respect of those with whom we Converse'.⁹⁸ It was of the utmost importance, Gailhard wrote, 'to get into the good opinion of the World'.⁹⁹ When Josiah Dare penned his manual of manners he told the attentive reader that his advice would become 'such Jewels as will set thee forth and gain thee honour and respect amongst all persons, with whom thou

⁹³ [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, pp. 12–13. ⁹⁴ Saint-Evremond, *Works*, 1, pp. 313, 317.

⁹⁵ [Callières], *The courtier's calling*, pp. 205–6. For other examples see e.g. Archibald Campbell, marquis of Argyle, *Instructions to a son* (London, 1661), p. 99; Saint-Evremond, *Miscellany essays*, 11, p. 164; Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, p. 10; B. B., *The young gentlemen way to honour* (London, 1678), sig. A2^{r-v}.

⁹⁶ [Callières], *The courtier's calling*, pp. 205–7. ⁹⁷ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 57.

⁹⁸ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, p. 2. ⁹⁹ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt 1, p. 195.

shalt converse'.¹⁰⁰ According to Courtin, 'politness' and 'agreeableness' had the 'power to conciliate the applause and affections of all people'.¹⁰¹ In the third edition of Courtin's treatise, it was further argued that in order to 'make himself beloved' a gentleman 'must first render himself amiable'. 'Now this', he went on, 'is done by behaving of our selves civilly, or with Civility to all men.'¹⁰² And *The polite gentleman* explained that 'we also often receive from those we Converse with such Marks of Honour and Esteem'.¹⁰³

To gain other gentlemen's respect was the means of assurance of one's membership in gentlemanly society. By civil behaviour a gentleman not merely demonstrated his gentlemanly character; he also proved that he esteemed the other gentlemen with whom he conversed. The culture of politeness was thus a way in which gentlemen constantly attested their mutual gentlemanly character. Boyer's definition of civility and politeness implied that by exercising these qualities 'we make other People have better Opinion of us and themselves'.¹⁰⁴ He argued that 'Civility is a desire to be civilly used, and to be commended for an accomplished well-bred Man'.¹⁰⁵ One writer suggested that a gentleman's 'sweetness, affability and manners' would procure 'the deserved love and admiration of all'.¹⁰⁶ According to John Locke, when one's behaviour was governed by '*Deference, Complaisance, and Civility*' he could be sure to elicit 'respect, love and esteem'.¹⁰⁷ Another English writer declared that 'a Civil Converse' was 'a certain exactness in all our words and expressions, in order to gain, converse, or encrease the Esteem and Friendship of those we converse withal'.¹⁰⁸

The crux of civility and politeness could thus be said to have been one's membership in civil or polite company. By reciprocal civilities gentlemen assured each other of their honour and esteem and at the same time marked themselves out from those outside of their circle. But this of course meant that a gentleman's esteem and honour crucially hinged on being included in the coterie of the polite. The notion of honour and reputation inherent in civility and politeness was thus strongly horizontal in character. Thomas Hobbes noted that men's 'true Value' or 'Honour'

¹⁰⁰ Josiah Dare, *Counsellor manners, his last legacy to his son* (London, 1673), sig. A4^{r-v}.

¹⁰¹ Courtin, *The rules of civility*, p. 5.

¹⁰² [Antoine de Courtin], *The rules of civility*, transl. [anon.] 3rd edn (London, 1675), p. 162; [Nicolas Rémond des Cours], *The true conduct of persons of quality*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1694), pp. 2-3.

¹⁰³ [Anon.], *The polite gentleman*, pp. 8, 16. See also H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁴ [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, p. 108. ¹⁰⁵ Boyer, *Characters*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁶ B. B., *The young gentlemen's way to honour*, pp. 59-60. ¹⁰⁷ Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 169.

¹⁰⁸ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, pp. 5, 4; Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, pp. 17, 10.

was nothing but how they were 'esteemed by others'.¹⁰⁹ The marquise de Lambert concurred. 'When one', she wrote, 'aims at gaining a great Reputation, one is always in a State of Dependance on the Opinion of others.'¹¹⁰ One's membership of the coterie of the honourable – the beau monde – was not so much contingent on one's lineage, still less on one's virtuous character; instead the membership was gained by agreeable behaviour and conversation and exercised by constant participation in civility and civil conversation – by constantly pleasing the other members of the group.

The culture of civility and politeness thus concerned the private sphere rather than the public one; its aim was not so much the public good as the gentleman's private good.¹¹¹ As La Rochefoucauld put in a maxim translated into English in 1670.

When Kingdoms are come to their height in point of politeness and civilization, it argues the approach of their declination, inasmuch as then, all their particular Inhabitants are bent upon the pursuit of their private concerns, and diverted from promoting the publick good.¹¹²

If a polite gentleman was always expected to be agreeable, he had above all to conform with the prevalent customs of gentlemanly society. It was incumbent upon gentlemen to comply with modes and fashions. He must not, as Waker rendered Della Casa, 'frame & compose' himself according to his '*own private* will and fancy, but according to the prescriptions and garbs of *those*' amongst whom he conversed and socialised.¹¹³ 'In *all* Instances of *civil conversation*', he defined it, 'you are to behave your self, not exactly according to the measures and dictates of *reason* . . . much less is your own *humour* and *fancy* to be your *Guide*, but *Custom*, the *Rule of Decency*; and that not as it was in *former* ages, but as it is at this *present* time.'¹¹⁴

One important area where gentlemen were required to conform with present customs was their attires. This was central in Della Casa's schemes to which Waker added that '*Custom* is the *Law & standard* of *Decencie* in *all* things of *this* Nature'.¹¹⁵ According to Jean Gailhard, when the young gentleman ventured 'into company', he must 'have handsome and fashionable cloaths'.¹¹⁶ One of the central rules of civility was,

¹⁰⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 63. ¹¹⁰ Marquise de Lambert, *Advice of a mother*, p. 15.

¹¹¹ Gordon 1994, p. 112.

¹¹² François, duc de La Rochefoucauld, *Epictetus junior, or maxims of modern morality: in two centuries*, transl. J[ohn] D[avies] (London, 1670), pp. 128–9; cf. François, duc de La Rochefoucauld, *Moral maxims and reflections, in four parts*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1694), p. 136.

¹¹³ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 7, 9. ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157. ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 41–2.

¹¹⁶ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt II, p. 73; Courtin, *The rule of civility*, pp. 152–4. For fashion see pp. 83–4.

according to Richard Head, that '*his habit ought to be suited according to the people he is to concern himself withal, never superfluous or Phantastick, yet proper and something indifferently Fashionable*'.¹¹⁷ 'Comliness' and 'a good grace', Callières asserted, were highly important for a courtier because it was 'his Carriage and his Countenance' which 'convince us of his Merit' and that 'he is a person of Quality'. But, he also added, his clothes should be 'not to affect strange fashions, or any out of the mode'.¹¹⁸

The utmost need to comply with the detailed rules of civility was extended far beyond the conformity of the latest fashion. In order to be civil and polite, a gentleman was required to do far more than just ensure that he behaved politely, uttered agreeable words and purchased fashionable clothes. This comes clear in Waker's rendering of Della Casa's argument for the necessity of ceremonies. The practice of ceremonies, he wrote, 'is worn into a *Custom*, and almost establish'd into a *Law*, we must submit to the *exercise* of it' – unless, of course, we wanted to return 'to the *primitive* times'.¹¹⁹

Thus as in Elizabethan and early Stuart material, it was argued that in civil and polite society what mattered most was the outward appearance. To some this could appear shocking but for many it was an obvious conclusion from the premise of agreeable politeness. Richard Head emphasised that civility only concerned with the exterior. 'Affability', he pointed out, 'differs little from Courtesie or Civility, for they both consist in all outward signs and caresses, that may make a man Believe, and that confidently too, there is no person more Esteemed and better Belov'd, than they by this subtle insinuating *Wheedle*.' Civility meant simply 'the edification, and building up of the outward man'. But the distressing conclusion was that 'external appearances frequently deceive our imaginations'. It followed that it was impossible to 'distinguish men by their out-sides'.¹²⁰

Vaumorière insisted that 'we must not neglect the outside. We should always so ordeur it, that the first impressions turn to our advantage, and dispose People the better to relish the Sentiments of our Mind, and the agreeable products of our Fancies'.¹²¹ Bellegarde claimed that 'a Man loses more than is imagin'd by neglecting outward Appearances'. This

¹¹⁷ H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, p. 43.

¹¹⁸ [Callières], *The courtier's calling*, pp. 69–71. See also Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *The modes: or, a conversation upon the fashions of all nations*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1735), p. 5; La Bruyère, *The characters*, pp. 299–304.

¹¹⁹ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 128–9, 134, 143, 158–9.

¹²⁰ H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 46, 43, 24. ¹²¹ [Vaumorière], *The art of pleasing*, pp. 17–19.

kind of negligence could even ruin 'in a moment all the Esteem People had of you before they knew you'. The reason for this was not far to seek, argued Bellegarde, because there was little doubt that 'we judge only by Appearances'.¹²² Trotti de La Chetardie reminded the young nobleman that 'neglect he must not, any of those exterior Qualities, that may serve to render him pleasant and grateful'.¹²³

Trying to convince the '*Beaux Esprits*' and '*Beau-monde*', James Forrester admitted in 1734 that politeness 'tends not so directly to amend People's Hearts, as to regulate their Conduct', but hastened to remind them that this was 'of no small Importance'. The essence of 'Politeness' consisted of 'a Thousand little *Civilities*, *Complacencies*, and *Endeavours* to give others Pleasure'. Thus 'Politeness' was nothing but 'an ornamental Accomplishment'; yet, human happiness depended 'as strongly on *small* Things, as on *great*'.¹²⁴ If politeness only concerned the outward appearance, it followed that gentleman's genuine opinion and inward principles must be ignored. In gentlemanly civility it was strongly prohibited to 'trouble others with the Articles of his *religious Creed*, or *political Engagements*'. We must 'aim', Forrester wrote, 'at being *quiet* within our selves, and *agreeable* to those among whom we live, let their political Notions be what they will'.¹²⁵

The need to conform with prevalent fashion was often couched in terms of humility. Courtin stated laconically that 'Civility' was 'nothing else but humility', and many others agreed.¹²⁶ According to Josiah Dare, civility consisted both of avoiding being 'unpleasant and offensive' and also of swimming 'with the stream' rather than 'against it'. It followed that 'thou wilt be accounted nothing, if thou *opposest* the *publick Customs*'. There seemed only one conclusion to be drawn: 'the *humble* man is the most agreeable person upon earth'.¹²⁷

In the late sixteenth century the emphasis placed on appearance had led many theorists of civil courtesy to accept flattery and dissimulation as its vital parts. By the late seventeenth century, most of those authors who were ready to address the thorny issue of the role of dissimulation and flattery in civility and politeness felt an obvious need to

¹²² Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, pp. 38, 366–7.

¹²³ [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, p. 11, but cf. p. 8.

¹²⁴ [James Forrester], *The polite philosopher: or, an essay on that art which makes a man happy in himself, and agreeable to others* (Dublin, 1734), pp. 22, 11, 54.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 22–5.

¹²⁶ Courtin, *The rules of civility*, p. 9; H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 37–42; Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, p. 76; S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 29–30.

¹²⁷ Dare, *Counsellor manners*, pp. 6–7, 14, 17.

couch the polite gentleman's accommodation to the fashions, customs and other shenanigans of civility in a less shocking attire. In Henry Stubbes's translation of Della Casa's *The arts of grandeur and submission*, a reader could learn that while a gentleman 'ought not *totally to esloigne* himself' from honesty and virtue, many also recommended flattery as a highly '*advantageous*' quality.¹²⁸ In *Galateo*, Della Casa had of course argued that although virtues were worthier than outward appearance, the latter proved to be 'more *advantageous* to men', especially to those, the translator Nathaniel Waker added, who resided 'in a *Court*'.¹²⁹ In translating Della Casa's account of the needs of complaisance, Waker employed the term '*dissemble*'.¹³⁰ Moreover, he added a lengthy discussion of flattery – 'a disease that *reigns* in the *Courts* of *Kings*'. Although Waker distanced himself from flattery he, nevertheless, concluded with an admonition: 'Be as *complaisant* as may consist with *innocence* and *discretion*.'¹³¹

Politeness could appear nothing but 'Trifles', but Abel Boyer was convinced that this was highly misleading because one's abilities to appear polite and civil 'make the World pass their final Verdict either *Pro* or *Con*, in the Character of a Man'. 'Good Manners' were, of course, 'a fashionable Imposture or Hypocrisy',¹³² and it was nothing short of ridiculous to express one's feelings in the court.¹³³ La Bruyère and Saint-Evremond concurred. 'We', wrote the latter, 'ought to forget that time, when it was enough to be thought virtuous, since Politeness, Gallantry, and the Knowledge of Pleasure make up a great part of our Merit at present.'¹³⁴

According to Roger Chartier, 'the tension between appearance and existence' epitomised 'baroque sensitivity and etiquette'. Civility, in other words, far from expressing the entire individual, could disguise one's feelings and sentiments.¹³⁵ Whereas Rémond des Cours juxtaposed civility and sincerity in a courtly context, noting that it is the court 'where Gentlemen are most Civil, and least Sincere',¹³⁶ Jean Gailhard pointed out that 'compliance is a good quality, very different from flattery, though to a common eye it appears very like'. It was precisely this quality

¹²⁸ Giovanni Della Casa, *The arts of grandeur and submission*, transl. Henry Stubbe (London, 1665), pp. 31–2.

¹²⁹ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 2–3.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 63; cf. *Galateo* (1575), pp. 24–5, *Galateo* (1988), pp. 21–2.

¹³¹ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 124–9. ¹³² [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, pp. 109, 97.

¹³³ Boyer, *The compleat French-master*, pp. 33–4. Cf. however, Courtin, *The rules of civility*, pp. 3–4, where Courtin argues that one's external behaviour reflects one's inner self.

¹³⁴ Saint-Evremond, *Works*, 1, p. 487; La Bruyère, *The characters*, p. 94. See also Jean Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon the politeness of manners; with maxims for civil society*, transl. [anon.] (London, 1707), pp. 167–70.

¹³⁵ Chartier 1987, pp. 82–7. ¹³⁶ Rémond des Cours, *The true conduct*, pp. 110, 141–3.

which offered 'one of the best advices, which in relation to a civil life [or 'courtesie', as he later added] may be given to a man', which was simply a total compliance with those whom one tried to please.¹³⁷

In her chapter 'Of the difference betwixt a Flatterer, and one that is Complaisant', Madeleine de Scudéry was also preoccupied with such window-dressing. While flattery was to be condemned, complaisance was an essential part of civility. But flattery and complaisance looked almost alike – indeed flattery could be called 'sordid Complaisance'.¹³⁸ The marquise de Lambert defined 'a Politeness of Manners' succinctly as 'saying Things of a flattering Nature, and an agreeable Turn'.¹³⁹ The author of *The art of complaisance* had a whole chapter on dissimulation, and argued that 'many persons Imagine that none can prosper in their designs at Court, without a continual dissimulation, and making a particular profession, never to speak their true thoughts'.¹⁴⁰ He also made a distinction between an 'excusable' and an 'inexcusable' flattery, declaring that 'there is no remedy, but we must indulge our selves some kind of flattery, but not in all the kinds of it'.¹⁴¹ He closely followed Della Casa and asserted that 'this Compliance ought not to be totally eloiigned from the regards of honesty and justice, though I do not bind him up to the rules of that exact and imaginary vertue which are only to be found in the books of Philosophers'.¹⁴²

Head wanted to brush all these window-dressings aside. His treatise was, as its subtitle announced, about 'the art of wheedling', and he acknowledged that '*this Art of Wheedling* . . . some would have called *Complaisance*'. But it was 'in plain terms, nothing else but the *Art of Insinuation*, or Dissimulation, compounded of mental reservation, seeming patience and humility, (self-obliging) civility, and a more than common affability, all which club to please, and consequently to gain by conversation'. Gentleman should have 'a special care' for 'his Countenance' which 'must be full of Kindness, continually smiling'. The same rule also applied to his actions which 'seem to aim at nothing more than what is honest, and just, whilst he draws his arrow at profit only'.¹⁴³

In the Renaissance theory of civil courtesy it had been emphasised not only that gentlemen must exchange courtesies and civilities and conduct

¹³⁷ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt II, pp. 106–7.

¹³⁸ Scudéry, *Conversations*, pt I, pp. 157–65; quotation p. 164.

¹³⁹ Marquise de Lambert, *Advice of a mother*, p. 19.

¹⁴⁰ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 8–13, pp. 55–6. See in general [Vaumorière], *The art of pleasing*, pp. 71–5.

¹⁴¹ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 78–9, 100–1. ¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁴³ H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 3, 43–4.

a civil conversation with one another but also that even the smallest departure from the code of courtesy was a clear sign of condescending behaviour and thus caused a serious affront. Many courtesy theorists had therefore also stressed the importance of complaisance and even dissimulation and flattery. The same assumption recurred in Restoration England. A reader perusing Waker's translation of Della Casa could easily learn that, whereas 'an *ingenuous* and *affable* deportment insinuates strongly into those we converse with, and insensibly steales away their hearts', a contrary behaviour would have catastrophic consequences. 'Sluggish behaviour' was said to be 'hugely *unacceptable*' and 'many little indecencies' were said to 'corrupt our *civil* conversation'.¹⁴⁴ Even the smallest insults were '*uncivil*'. Waker emphasised that he who 'would be *acceptable* and *obliging* in his *Conversation*' must not only 'carefully abstain from' giving the lie, but also eschew telling unpleasant truths. Since he must never fail to act politely, it followed that he should be rather 'civilly false' than 'rudely honest'. It was more important to be 'well-manner'd' than 'well-born'.¹⁴⁵ Following prevailing customs and fashion had become more important for a courtier and a gentleman than obeying Christianity. '*Custome*', Waker noted, 'is a *second nature*', so much so that it even '*prevails* upon men more than . . . the *institutions* of *Religion*'.¹⁴⁶ In Scudéry's dialogue 'Of dissimulation, and of Sincerity', one of the interlocutors also exclaimed that genuine sincerity was both 'imprudent' and 'troublesome', being in fact 'an uncivil and rude sincerity'.¹⁴⁷

Courtin's *The rules of civility* was advertised on the grounds that the reader could learn from it 'the exactness and punctilio of Civility' which was 'so indispensably necessary in the conversation of the world'.¹⁴⁸ Courtin strongly exhorted the courtier and the reader not only to follow all the punctilios of civility but also to avoid insulting anyone.¹⁴⁹ According to Esprit, men exercised civility in order to be taken as polite gentlemen. They could therefore 'transgress against Civility with less impunity then they that offend against the Laws of Temperance, Fidelity, and Justice'.¹⁵⁰ It followed that 'the frequent violation of these Precepts' of civility was 'the most usual source of Hatred and Quarrels'. 'Self-love' prompted men to endeavour 'to live free from Injury, and look upon it as a mischief insupportable to be contemn'd or Disrespected'. The worst

¹⁴⁴ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 4–6, 16–20.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 65, 115–16. Margaret Cavendish, *CCXI. Sociable letters* (London, 1664), p. 388.

¹⁴⁶ Della Casa, *The refin'd courtier*, pp. 152–5. ¹⁴⁷ Scudéry, *Conversations*, 1, pp. 166–7, 169.

¹⁴⁸ Courtin, *The rules of civility*, sig. A3^v, see also p. 136.

¹⁴⁹ Courtin, *The rules of civility* (1678), pp. 286–7, 265–75. ¹⁵⁰ [Esprit], *The falshood*, p. 92.

insult for a gentleman was a demonstration of disesteem. How could this be done? Esprit agreed with Della Casa that even the minutest breach in the precepts of civility caused disrespect. If gentlemen 'be not Visited, if Men refuse to Salute 'em, or to speak to them with Respect and Esteem, they grow presently angry and incens'd against those that so treat them with scorn and indifferency'.¹⁵¹ Even the smallest incivility was a clear sign of lack of respect, which in the theory of politeness was the worst kind of insult. As Esprit put it, 'amongst all the offences committed against the Persons of Men, there is not one which he more keenly resents then that of Contempt; he conceives such a mortal aversion against those that pay him not those Honours which the common Custom of the World requires, that it is impossible for him to have any favourable sentiments for those people'.¹⁵²

According to Bellegarde, 'Unpoliteness' was 'of all Vices, that which makes a Man most despicable'.¹⁵³ La Bruyère developed a similar argument, asserting that if little was required to gain people's 'Esteem', even less was needed to lose it. 'The least Thing in the World', he wrote, sufficed 'to make People believe that we are proud, uncivil, disdainful and disobliging'.¹⁵⁴ John Locke concurred and noted that 'contempt or want of due respect discovered either in looks, words, or gesture . . . brings always uneasiness with it. For no body can contentedly bear being slighted'.¹⁵⁵ In *An essay concerning human understanding* he pointed out that the laws of fashion were much stricter than either God's law or the laws of the state. In breaching the divine law one could always 'entertain Thoughts of future reconciliation', and in breaching a civil law 'they frequently flatter themselves with the hopes of Impunity'. But the laws of fashion were different. 'No Man', Locke insisted, 'scapes the Punishment of their Censure and Dislike, who offends against the Fashion and Opinion of the Company he keeps, and would recommend himself to'.¹⁵⁶

DUELLING, REFLEXIVE HONOUR AND THE RESTORATION OF CIVILITY

The private duel of honour, as we have seen, had come to England as an integral part of the Italian Renaissance theory of courtesy and

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 91. ¹⁵² Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁵³ Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, p. 11; also [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, p. 92.

¹⁵⁴ La Bruyère, *The characters*, p. 94. ¹⁵⁵ Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 201.

¹⁵⁶ John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), II, xxviii, 12, pp. 356–7; Richard Graham, viscount Preston, *Angliae speculum morale, the moral state of England* (London, 1670), sig. A2^v.

the courtier. The advocates of the theory claimed that the threat of a challenge and thus of a possible duel prompted gentlemen to behave more politely. But they also asserted that if a gentleman showed an uncivil sign to another gentleman whether it was a suspicious look, an accusation of lying or striking a blow, it put the other gentleman's reputation in doubt as long as he retorted with a challenge. In this way a challenge and a duel were the means of restoring gentlemanly civility.

Exactly the same line of argument was put forward in the late seventeenth century. Josiah Dare advised a gentleman 'to be *courteous* to all', to 'take heed of slandering another, or *poisoning* his *reputation*' and to 'oppose no man whilst he is *talking* or *disputing*'. If a gentleman felt compelled 'to dispute of any thing' it must be done 'after a *pleasing* manner', otherwise he would be in danger of giving the lie and thus be 'compelled to answer for it by a *Duel*'.¹⁵⁷

The gentlemanly world of civility and politeness was not only a world of agreeable sociability; it was also, and perhaps even more so, a world of cut-throat competition. David Abercromby thought that 'generally men of the same Profession hate one another'. Although this rule could easily be applied to 'Statesmen, Tradesmen, Lawyers' and other professions, it was most conspicuous amongst courtiers. 'How intimate soever men may be before they become Courtiers, they', Abercromby maintained, 'are no sooner set up together at Court, but Jealousie seizing upon their hearts, kindles a Flame that nothing can extinguish but the Ruine of their Fellow Courtier.' It did not follow, however, that the courtiers were openly fighting each other. On the contrary, they invariably behaved with extreme politeness towards one another. They 'receive and complement' each other 'after the most obliging manner in the World'.¹⁵⁸

Underlying the culture of civility and politeness was the competitive character of courtly and gentlemanly society. The values of pleasure and agreeable sociability were often stressed but this world of agreeable politeness was at the same time depicted as a place of fierce competition rather than mutual pleasure. The court was nothing short of 'an Enemies Country', as Rémond des Cours put it.¹⁵⁹ But this stiff competition, as one observer noted, did not govern only the court but the entire world of 'Nobility & Gentry'.¹⁶⁰ There was a direct link between this dangerous and competitive nature of the court and gentlemanly society at large on

¹⁵⁷ Dare, *Counsellor manners*, pp. 34, 42, 45, 46, 48–9.

¹⁵⁸ David Abercromby, *A moral discourse of the power of interest* (London, 1690), pp. 73–4.

¹⁵⁹ [Rémond des Cours], *The true conduct*, p. 141; see also e.g. [anon.], *The looking-glass that flatters not* (London, 1671), pp. 1–8. This was said to be written 'by a Displac'd Courtier'.

¹⁶⁰ [Anon.], *Honours preservation without blood: or, a sober advice to duellists* (London, 1680), pp. 16–17.

the one hand and the demands for exceptionally high level of civility and politeness on the other.

The writer Francis Osborne advised his son to '*Despise no Enemy*, especially at *Court*: For where *Jealousy* holds the *Scales*, a small *drachm* of *Detraction* will turne the *Beame*.' There seemed to be a discrepancy in the court between 'the indeavours of *Malice* and *Revenge*' and '*Civility* and *Law*' which were 'pretended at least to command' there.¹⁶¹ The marquis of Argyle agreed, reminding his own son that 'a cholerick person' would not make a good courtier because a successful man of court had to be ready to comply with intricate rules of courtly behaviour.¹⁶² The whole art of complaisance, so the author of a book about it asserted, was designed to take care of and contain the unscrupulous competition within gentlemanly society, but especially at the court where it was said to be both the fiercest and most unscrupulous. It followed that, although the art of complaisance was 'extremely advantageous to all persons', it was 'especially of use to those who place themselves in the Court where conversation', as the author revealingly noted, 'is most difficult, and appears with greatest variety'. Courtiers were 'push'd on by ambition or desire of pleasure' and there was 'the equal tendency of so many to the same end', so much so that there were 'many frequent and unexpected adventures, which ought to oblige the Courtier to a more strict reservation and a dissimulation more covert, and to the practise of those finesses which may secure him amidst the pride and circumventions of his competitors'.¹⁶³

In Renaissance England the duel had been seen as the only solution to even a small violation of gentlemanly civility in such a competitive culture. Dudley, Lord North, expressed similar views in 1659.¹⁶⁴ Hobbes's account of duelling in *Leviathan* followed this well-trodden path. He began by noting that humankind in general and gentlemen in particular were in constant competition with each other. There were several forms of competition but by far the fiercest contest was 'for Honour and Dignity'. This fierceness often caused 'Envy and Hatred, and finally Warre'.¹⁶⁵ One solution was to establish 'Lawes of Honour, and a publique rate of the worth of such men as have deserved, or are able to deserve well of the Common-wealth'. All this granting of 'titles of Honour' must belong to the powers of 'the Sovereign'.¹⁶⁶ This solution was based on a vertical notion of honour, that someone was raised above the others. But Hobbes also embraced the horizontal notion of honour: man's honour

¹⁶¹ Francis Osborne, *Advice to a son. The second part* (London, 1658), pp. 8–9.

¹⁶² Argyle, *Instructions*, pp. 51–5. ¹⁶³ S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁶⁴ Smuts 1999, p. 120. ¹⁶⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 119, 70–5. ¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

was nothing else than how he was 'esteemed by others'. Amongst the ways in which men could honour each other, Hobbes listed conventional qualities of civility: first, 'to speak to another with consideration, to appear before him with decency, and humility, is to Honour him'. Similarly, 'to agree with in opinion is to Honour'. Even more, 'to flatter, is to Honour', as Hobbes put it succinctly.¹⁶⁷ But if acting with a high sense of civility was to confer honour on one's conversants, precisely the same values solved the problem of the competition for honour and in fact made sociability possible. A high sense of civility and agreeable behaviour were indispensable for social life. According to Hobbes, 'Complaisance; that is to say, *That every man strive to accommodate himself to the rest*' was the 'fifth Law of Nature'.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, if 'Complaisance' made men 'Sociable', even the smallest departure from its rules caused a serious ado. To break the rules of civility – 'to neglect' one's interlocutor or even simply 'to dissent' from him amounted to 'Dishonour'.¹⁶⁹ Hobbes was convinced that there was only one way in which men resisted the dishonour occasioned by such uncivil behaviour. 'All signes of hatred, or contempt', he wrote, 'provoke to fight; insomuch as most men choose rather to hazard their life, than not to be revenged'.¹⁷⁰ Duels were, in brief, 'effects of rash speaking, and of the fear of Dishonour'.¹⁷¹ The duel was thus the only means to restore one's honour when it was questioned by even the slightest sign of incivility. Hobbes summarised the entire argument by carefully echoing duelling treatises. Men, he wrote, were always ready to fight duels 'for trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, and any other signe of undervalue in their Kindred, their Friends, their Nation, their Profession, or their Name'.¹⁷²

Many writers of civility and politeness put forward a similar analysis. Nathaniel Waker insisted that a courtier must never put up with small insults. Explaining Della Casa's account of ceremonies, Waker pointed out that 'the omission of a *due* payment of *them* does not only *displease* but *injure* others'. Quarrels arising from 'this cause that one took the wall of his *Superior*, or did not give him that *respect* as he passed by, which of *right* belong'd to him' could not be decided 'but by the *sword*'.¹⁷³ According to Pierre Bayle, men aspired most to be esteemed by other men, and therefore they were ready to 'run thro abundance of Trouble and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 63–5.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., pp. 64–5.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 107.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁷³ Della Casa, *The reſin'd courtier*, pp. 152–3, 178–9; Samuel Tuke, *The adventures of five hours. A tragi-comedy* (London, 1663), p. 22.

Hazard to revenge an Affront receiv'd in the presence of a few'.¹⁷⁴ Such an assumption, Bayle went on, made honour more important than the precepts of Christianity. Whereas the Christian notion of courage was 'fitted to endue us with an heroick Patience', 'by a Man of Courage, the World understands one extremely nice in the Point of Honor, who can't bear the least Affront, who revenges, swift as Lighting, and at the hazard of his Life, the least disrespect'.¹⁷⁵

The delicacy created by outward politeness, Jacques Esprit wrote, rendered gentlemen 'sensible of an Injury'. Even a small incivility kindled 'his Anger, and that he betakes himself to his Arms to kindle his Resentment'. As Esprit summarised the entire argument, 'at the same time that they seem to have such a scorn and contempt of themselves, they continually observe the behaviour of others towards 'em; they rigorously expect from others those Formalities and Respects which are their due, and revenge the least injuries done 'em'.¹⁷⁶

In his character of 'a quarreller' Samuel Butler depicted the reflexivity of civility with exceptional acuteness. A quarreller, he opened his analysis, 'sets so great a value upon himself, that no man is able to come up to it; and therefore whatsoever is said or done to him he expounds as an undervaluing and disparagement of his high and might merits'. Even the smallest possible affront put the quarreller's reputation in jeopardy. 'His punctilios of honour', Butler insisted, 'are as subtle as the point of his sword'.¹⁷⁷ In Butler's account, a duellist was said to meet his enemy with two weapons – with 'single rapier, and civility'. He used both weapons adroitly and was 'as careful not to be vanquished at the one, as the other', treating his enemy 'with singular courtship'. The duel was an act of calm civility and politeness rather than one of passion and anger. 'There', Butler wrote, 'is nothing of unkind in all the quarrel but only the beginning of it, and the rest of the proceedings are managed as civilly as any other treaty; and in the end, when one falls, they part with extraordinary endearments'.¹⁷⁸

Several of the late seventeenth-century civility treatises defended duelling along these lines. Trotti de La Chetardie argued in *Instructions for a young nobleman* that 'the Esteem of all the World' was, after God, the most

¹⁷⁴ Pierre Bayle, *Miscellaneous reflections, occasion'd by the comet*, transl. [anon.] (2 vols., London, 1708), II, pp. 368–9.

¹⁷⁵ Bayle, *Miscellaneous*, I, pp. 283–4; see also II, p. 331. See also [William Webster], *A casuistical essay on anger and forgiveness* (London, 1750), pp. 41, 77.

¹⁷⁶ [Esprit], *The falshood*, pp. 193–7.

¹⁷⁷ Samuel Butler, *Characters*, ed. Charles W. Davis (Cleveland, 1970), pp. 304–5, 270.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

important thing for a gentleman or a courtier, and 'he must be mindful that the loss thereof is irreparable'; he must, in other words, be ready to defend his honour. The gentleman was strongly advised 'to keep his Rank, of which he must be even jealous, and support its advantages with the highest Rigour and Haughtiness, against those who shall be so bold as to dispute 'em with him'.¹⁷⁹

It was important, however, to be able to distinguish between a real insult which touched one's honour and a mere raillery; 'a man would pass for a Clown' if he mistook the latter for the former. The situation was of course seriously compounded by the fact that 'there is as much hurt in being unseasonably pettish and angry, as in not being so when there is occasion'. When he moved to those things 'which are positively offensive', Trotti de La Chetardie began with a meek protestation that 'I do not advise' the gentleman to prefer 'the Maxims of the World . . . before those of the Gospel'. Nonetheless, according to these maxims, real insults could not 'be repulsed with too much vigour'. Insults which required immediate responses included 'Blows, the Lye, reproaches of Treachery, Baseness and Cowardise'. In front of such injuries, the gentleman must resort to his rapier. Fencing, Trotti de La Chetardie wrote, was 'of an absolute necessity' for a gentleman because it served 'to preserve both Life and Honour'.¹⁸⁰ But what about the maxims of 'the Gospel'? Trotti de La Chetardie retorted that 'since God has the goodness to pardon the first Motions, those who exercise the Laws will not be more rigorous'.¹⁸¹ Since the gentleman had to express his bitter resentment against anyone questioning his honour, God and lawful authorities should connive at this resentment – they should forbear punishing gentlemen for duels and grasp that duelling was an utmost necessity in the prevalent ideology of gentlemanly civility.

When the author of *The art of complaisance* discussed insults he claimed that by far the worst was giving the lie.¹⁸² The gentleman had always to resent such an injury openly.¹⁸³ Another courtesy manual advised about sending and responding to a challenge in a proper manner. An injured gentleman was advised to remind the one who had hurled the insult of his affront: 'I am not so mean and low a spirit to pass by those your rude actions without taking just revenge according to the offence.' In his challenge the gentleman was advised to ask the opponent to prove himself a man 'with your Sword in your hand'. If he refused

¹⁷⁹ [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, pp. 2–6; cf. [Rémond des Cours], *The true conduct*, pp. 1–2.

¹⁸⁰ [Trotti de La Chetardie], *Instructions*, p. 11.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–19; cf. p. 21.

¹⁸² S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 11–13, 22–3, 54–5, 76–7.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–4, 146–7.

it was best to resort to publicity. The original challenge should, therefore, issue a warning that 'I shall post you up about the Town for an inconsiderable Fool and scandalous coward, and shall make my self satisfaction some other way.' The reply was suggested to be written with utmost insolence: 'I scorn to defile my Sword with such cowardly blood as thine is, but shall rather satisfie my self in giving thee a good sufficient beating.'¹⁸⁴

Patience might be an exemplary virtue but its precepts, Callières stressed in *The courtiers calling*, had not 'bound our hands to let our selves be insulted on'. If nature taught 'us to defend our lives', it was nothing less than 'Reason' which taught us 'to preserve our honour'.¹⁸⁵ The reason was not far to seek. Honour, Callières insisted, was 'very tender among Persons of Quality: if it be once wounded, it is no easie matter to heal it again'. Callières was thus embracing a reflexive notion of honour. If a courtier's honour was questioned, he had to respond or he was in danger of losing it altogether. There was obvious discrepancy, Callières argued, concurring with Annibale Romei and others, between losing and regaining one's honour. 'To be guilty of one weakness is sufficient to loose it, and a hundred worthy actions can hardly regain it.' The courtier must spare no effort to maintain his honour – to conform with the rules of courtly society to the least detail. It was 'incumbent' on him, Callières wrote, 'to conform himself to the Manners of the Court, or not to come at it'. The courtier must be ready 'to resent Injuries as well as Courtesies'; his basic rules, Callières maintained, were 'neither to give an affront, nor take' one. A duel was nothing less than a duty for a man of courage: 'if he loves his Honour, he will never suffer it to be hurt without satisfaction'.¹⁸⁶

Callières thus agreed with the earlier authors of civil courtesy that in order to live up to the standards of civility prevalent in court society, every gentleman attending it had to be ready to issue a challenge and fight a duel. It was highly important, however, both to 'deliberate in cold blood to fight a good Duel' and 'to perform it advantageously' to boot. Yet Callières was no less convinced that every courtier was thoroughly familiar with the code of civility and duelling – 'a man of Courage has no need of Rule in this case'; he himself could therefore dispense with more detailed description of the duelling code. He also noted that duelling was 'very common', but most common 'among Men of the Sword'.¹⁸⁷ But if, despite his Herculean efforts, the courtier 'should chance to be so

¹⁸⁴ [Anon.], *The wits academy: or, the muses delight* (London, 1677), pp. 106–7.

¹⁸⁵ [Callières], *The courtier's calling*, pp. 47–8. ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9. ¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–9.

unhappy' that he was not able to live up to the expectations and did not have the valour and courage to resent an insult, he must abandon the life of the courtier and 'hide his Cowardice under a Gown or a Surplice' – to assume the life of a scholar or a priest, professions where a man did not have to exhibit his valour by fighting a duel. 'Valour', Callières declared, 'is a Virtue so absolutely requisite for a Gentleman, that without it he cannot boast of any good quality.' The high requirements of valour further demanded not just resentment to insults; they made no less exorbitant demands for the courtier in the moment of the actual duel. He was expected to behave 'gallantly' which first of all amounted to avoiding any use of an 'artifice'. But it also required him to remember that 'it is not enough to be valiant in appearance, but to be so in reality'. This meant that the courtier must be himself 'well satisfi'd' of his 'own courage' and so his enemies 'will soon enough perceive it'.¹⁸⁸

Callières was clearly aware that there was a wide gap between the precepts he adhered to and those of Christianity. 'I am', he explained, 'very sensible that these Precepts are not too Christian-like, forasmuch as it is very difficult to reconcile the Maximes of the World, and the Court with the Principle of our Religion.' Yet, he had no uncertainty about the order of priority. 'This Treatise', he candidly pointed out, 'is not written for their [i.e. religious people's] instructions; I treat only of a Conduct purely Humane and Moral.' Even more, his maxims formed a religion of their own. Poking fun at Christianity, Callières wrote that 'my Religion prohibits me to hate my Neighbour, but it permits me to love my proper Interest, which I cannot maintain but by repulsing such as oppose it'. Such an argument enabled him to brush aside all Christian objections to duelling and to 'conclude that I ought to defend my self, and may be Judge in my own Cause'.¹⁸⁹

As well as emphasising the polite and civil nature of a gentleman's behaviour and speech, the royalist earl of Carbery asserted to his son that 'a Man's honour is a tender, pure thinge, apt to be sullied with the least breath of Common Ayre, much more if a Gentleman of Repute throw dirte upon it'. If a gentleman's honour was challenged there was only one honourable course of action left. A gentleman had to defend his 'Virgin Reputation' – one stain not wiped away would destroy it. 'Virgin Reputation' must be even preserved 'from suspect', let alone from a real insult. There was no room for religious scruples either, for 'god preserue you from following the funerall of your Honour'. Moreover, 'he is a

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–9, 66–9.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–7.

miserable person in deede that survives a lost name'. These rules only applied, Carbery emphasised to his son, to those who belonged to the honour community. 'It is noe fault', he wrote, 'not to be honourable, but it is an vnardonable basenesse to haue beene.'¹⁹⁰

Carbery was convinced that insults which required resentment were particularly prone to occur when the intricate rules of polite conversation were not adhered to. Duelling was especially pertinent to questions of civil conversation. 'A free Tongue', he told his son, had 'neede of a strong hand and a stout heart'. The son was advised to remember his own dignity but also never to 'affront' anyone 'with whom you dare not fight'.¹⁹¹ The earl thought that 'there are many actes of Generosity to be performed to an Enemy'. If, for instance, your enemy 'lies at thy mercy' you must not 'take aduantage further then in relation to your security'. This way you could 'let him see Thou canst pardon as nobly, as content'. Carbery also instructed his son to give 'a publicke and due prayse' for the merits of the opponent, but if he 'be scurrilous or rayle' you must not use a similar language, but be ready 'to doe a Courtesy'. Finally, the earl of Carbery reminded his son that it was important 'in a faire triall' to be 'modest' in winning, noting that 'you vanquish your Enemy agayne, if you vse him with Ciuility, and your Victory with modesty'.¹⁹²

A similar account can also be found from Jean Gailhard's *The compleat gentleman*. Gailhard pointed out that it was a 'difficult' and 'ticklish question' what to do 'with men of a rude and uncivil carriage, who are offensive and quarrelsome'; it all depended on the particular circumstances. One thing was certain, however. 'Whether or not must he suffer affronts, and injuries' hinged on 'whether or not it be a real affront'. Of course, it was possible to argue that 'one must endeavour to cure the imagination, which is the distempered part, with making it to know that there is no offence, whatsoever nature it be of; which for its satisfaction can deserve any man's death, no not the lie, nor the blow'. Nevertheless, Gailhard opted for a middle course: 'of those who are offended, some take exceptions at nothing, and others at every thing: these are two extrems to be avoided'. Relying on the authority of Aristotle and Seneca, he argued that if one resented no injuries it was a certain 'sign of a low soul, of a poor and fainting spirit, and of a heartless man'. Suffering 'one injury upon the back of another' would eventually account for

¹⁹⁰ Richard Vaughan, earl of Carbery, 'Richard earl of Carbery's advice to his son' (1651), ed. Virgil B. Heltzel, *The Huntington Library Bulletin*, no. 11 (1937), pp. 93, 96, 95.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 93, 102-3.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 103-5. See also Osborne, *Advice to a son. The second part*, p. 9.

'a pusillanimous creature, fitter to live in Woods, and Wilderness, than in the society of mankind'. It would have been a cardinal error to take such behaviour for 'a virtue'. Indeed, in a marginal note Gailhard pointed out that 'to do and suffer no wrong is the part of a Gentleman', although he hastened to add that 'the point of honor' consisted as much in 'the practise of morals' as 'shewing heart and courage'. The conclusion was, however, inevitable: 'certainly no rational person will condemn this resentment, only will advise me to use honest and lawful means to get satisfaction'.¹⁹³

But resenting injuries could be objected to not merely by the precepts of morality; it could also be opposed by 'a Divine Precept to bear injuries', which Gailhard was ready to 'confess, when 'tis for conscience sake, and for the cause and glory of God, or upon the account of Religion'. Christianity told us both that 'the life we venture is not ours' but belongs to God and that 'we must not have boldness to destroy the image of our Sovereign God, which is man'. But to take these precepts as applicable to everyday life in general or to the life of a gentleman in particular would be nothing less than to 'set all earthly things in a confusion, and destroy all manner of propriety, right, and justice'. It would be absurd, Gailhard argued, to demand that 'I sit still, be an idle spectator, and suffer it' when 'a man will take away my estate, my life, and reputation, which I cannot subsist without'.¹⁹⁴ Gailhard, as so many before him, dismissed religious counterarguments against duelling. The maintenance of a gentleman's honour outdid God's commandments, with which anyone worth a gentleman's salt had, willy-nilly, to comply.

Having repudiated moral and religious arguments against duelling, Gailhard finally turned to legal arguments. He started by noting that '*Duels*, or challenge into the field' had been used in these situations, but they were 'now forbidden by all civilized Nations, though formerly it was allowed by Princes who were witnesses and judges of these single combats'. Gailhard discussed at length the way in which France had tried to solve the problem of duelling using 'the Court of Marshals'.¹⁹⁵ He also noted how satisfaction was sought in different ways in different countries. In Italy they commonly used 'the *Stiletto* or Dagger' and in Spain 'the *Scopetada* or shooting of a Gun'. But whilst the means could be different, yet 'every where they are sensible of injuries', and the reader was instructed to follow the habits of the country he happened to be in.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Gailhard, *The compleat gentleman*, pt II, pp. 123–5, 126–7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, part II, pp. 126–7, 130. ¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, part II, pp. 127–9.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, part II, p. 129.

This was, however, far from a sufficient solution. Gailhard made it plain that the problem of receiving satisfaction was considerably compounded in such cases where there were 'no ways for a man to right himself, nor no laws to procure him satisfaction'. In such a situation, Gailhard could seemingly do nothing but 'leave to every one's prudence and genius' to find out the best method. Yet, a gentleman must 'suffer nothing to the prejudice of his honour which he ought to be very tender of'.¹⁹⁷ An attentive reader was thus left with only one solution. If he wanted to resent insults hurled at him and get satisfaction for them, he must remember that fencing was 'a necessary Exercise' for both 'single, or more general fight'. The rapier belonged to the gentleman's attire, and it was taken for granted that he knew how to use it.¹⁹⁸

It was a contemporary commonplace, which even a fairly superficial acquaintance with fencing manuals made obvious, that the rapier was expected to be used in duelling fields. These manuals left little doubt what the ultimate aim of mastering fencing was. Henry Blackwell assumed that a gentleman would in the course of his life challenge someone or be himself challenged to a duel.¹⁹⁹ The ultimate aim of fencing was nothing less than killing your opponent.²⁰⁰ The same assumptions guided William Hope's manual,²⁰¹ and were even more forcefully presented by Samuel Butler. According to him, 'a fencer' taught 'the theory of killing, wounding, and running through, and with the privilege of a Doctor professes murder and sudden death'. He could be called 'a duel-Doctor' because he instructed gentlemen in 'the discipline of duels' and told them how 'to run a man through correctly and accurately'.²⁰² Even John Locke made the same assumption in *Some thoughts concerning education*. Being skilful in fencing made gentlemen 'often more touchy than needs, on Points of Honour'.²⁰³

DUELLING AND THE ENGLISH GENTLEMAN

At the same time as duelling was still examined and defended in the context of civility, a wholly new image of duelling started to emerge.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, part II, p. 129. ¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, part II, pp. 49–50.

¹⁹⁹ Henry Blackwell, *The English fencing-master: or, the compleat tutor of the small sword* (1701) (London, 1702), pp. 51, 53. See e.g. B. B., *The young gentlemen's way to honour*, p. 59. For traditional skills see Zachary Wylde, *The English master of defence: or, the gentleman's a-la-mode accomplishment* (York, 1711), especially p. 5. George Etherege, *The man of mode* (1676), in *The plays of Sir George Etherege*, ed. Michael Corder (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 400–1, 424–7. See also e.g. [anon.], *The town-bully's bravery: or, the high-way Hector's ample confession of his lew'd life* (London, n.d.).

²⁰⁰ Blackwell, *The English fencing-master*, e.g. pp. 24, 25.

²⁰¹ William Hope, *The compleat fencing-master* (London, 1691), pp. 121–6.

²⁰² Butler, *Characters*, pp. 272–3. ²⁰³ Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 254–5.

In many ways this was a highly contrasting image to the entire earlier tradition of duelling. In the late sixteenth century duelling had almost invariably been linked with Italy, and from the early part of the seventeenth century the culture of civility and thus the image of duelling had become predominantly French. This was still the case in the latter part of the century when many of the treatises which expounded duelling were French in origin. But this conception was increasingly replaced by a new account where duelling was no longer perceived as a foreign import. On the contrary, duelling was domesticated. According to this new conception, duelling belonged to the world of free and sturdy English gentlemen rather than to the world of Italian or French fops, beaux and gallants.

Perhaps the earliest writer who developed this line of argument was Margaret Cavendish. In her *Sociable letters* (1664) she explored the discrepancy between fashionable beaux and true gentlemen as well as the duel's role in their respective forms of life.²⁰⁴ Her point of departure was that 'all Gallant Gentlemen ought to wear Swords, at all Times, and in all Places and Companies'. The sword was not simply a frivolous piece of attire, however. Gentlemen should not merely wear 'the Sword of Valour' which had 'a sharp metal'd Blade', but they should also have 'Skill to Manage it, and Judgment and Discretion to know When, and on Whom to Use it'.²⁰⁵

Cavendish had observed, however, recent developments in the duelling theory with growing dismay and had found that it was seriously askew. First, she was convinced that the fashionable way of fighting with both pistols and swords 'with their Doublets on, which serves instead of an Armour, and for the most part a Horse-back' was highly unbecoming to a gentleman. The use of pistols in particular rendered duelling suitable for children and 'mean bred Persons'. It was only in a sword fight, Cavendish was convinced, that a gentleman could exhibit 'Active Valour'.²⁰⁶ Cavendish was also annoyed that gentlemen often fought duels for 'such Frivolous, Idle, or Base Causes' as 'Women, or Hawks, or Dogs, or Whores, or about Cards or Dice'. And current custom that seconds were fighting with the principals also received her scathing condemnation as 'an Unjust, Irrational, Inhuman, and Wicked Fashion or Practice'. All these abominable trends Cavendish contrasted with the proper 'Duel of Honour' which was fought by the true gentleman who was 'as Unwilling to Give an Offence as to Take an Affront'.

²⁰⁴ I am extremely grateful to Susan James for directing me to Margaret Cavendish.

²⁰⁵ Cavendish, *Sociable letters*, pp. 118–20. ²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4.

Just like many other advocates of duelling, Cavendish contended that gentlemen ought to observe the rules of politeness. This meant both behaving politely and being sensitive to one's own reputation. The gentleman should measure both 'his Sword' and 'his Quarrel, by the Length and Breadth of Honour'. Of all this Cavendish claimed, despite her sex, an intimate knowledge, because she had been 'Born, bred, lived, and Married, all with Sword-men'. Her husband had been 'a General of an Army of 3,000 men' and was 'the best Horseman and Swordman in the World'; two of her three brothers had been 'Souldiers' and her father had not only been 'a Swordman', but had been banished for a while 'for Killing a Gentleman in a Duel of Honour'.²⁰⁷

Cavendish's distinction between the proper duels of honour and the skewed ones was indicative of a larger break between her account and the prevalent theory of duelling. She sharply separated proper gallantry and some recent but false trends of gallantry and civility. In one of her letters she spoke about 'the Gallants of the Time, I mean Gallants for Youth and Bravery, for Vice and Vanity, for Expence and Prodigality, for foolish Quarrels, and rash Duels'.²⁰⁸ These perilous trends were best characterised by the word 'mode' and its followers Cavendish called 'mode-Gallants'. Neither 'mode' nor 'mode-Gallants' earned anything but ridicule from her. 'There', she observed condescendingly, 'are amongst Mankind as often Mode Phrases in Speech, as Mode Fashions in Cloaths and Behaviour, and so Moded they are, as their Discourse is as much Deckt with those Phrases as their Cloaths with several Coloured Ribbands, or Hats with Feathers, or Bodyes with Affected motions.' Indeed most people were enchanted by fashion.²⁰⁹

In condemning the servile imitation of fashion, Cavendish was expressing her dislike in certain forms of gallantry and civility. As we have seen, the imperative need to comply with the latest fashion was strongly emphasised by many writers on civility. But Cavendish denounced roundly all such arguments for complaisance, for the habit of following fashionable opinions – 'to have Minds according to the Mode' or 'to have a mode-Judgment'. Such people 'give their Judgments and Opinions according to the Mode' and their speech was full of 'Mode Phrases'. They were, she wrote in another letter, 'outwardly Formal'. Most importantly, they were 'Couragious or Cowardly according to the Mode'.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 142–5, 107.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 44. See also Hobbes's description of 'vain-glorious men' in *Leviathan*, p. 72.

²⁰⁹ Cavendish, *Sociable letters*, p. 131. ²¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 131, 133, 107.

The demeanour of these 'mode-Gallants' of the present generation contrasted sharply with true gentlemen or 'True and Good Wit[s]' of the earlier one, as Cavendish sometimes referred to them. They lived 'with the Seniors of the Time', regarding 'not the Mode, but Chuse and Prefer what is Best, and not what is Most in Fashion'. Moreover, they spoke 'not with Mode-Phrases, but such Words as are most Plain to be Understood, and the Best to Deliver or Declare Sense and Reason'. Their clothes were such as were 'most Useful, Easie and Becoming'. The same applied to their food and drink, music and taste. Even more importantly, in their deportments they did not follow the fashion but rather 'those which are Most Manly and Least Apish, Fantastical or Constrain'd'. But most importantly of all, they were not 'Couragious or Cowardly according to the Mode, but . . . according to the Cause of Quarrel'. This meant that they could easily ignore all the injuries inflicted by 'Drunk, Mad, or a Base, Inferiour Person, fitter for his Man's Quarrel, than for his own'. But it also meant that they were always ready to fight 'for Honour'.²¹¹ A proper gentleman was 'Valiant' and 'Wise'; he would not 'Rashly or Foolishly Quarrel, but Warily and Resolutely Fight'; he would measure both 'his Sword' and 'his Quarrel, by the Length and Breadth of Honour'. Whereas a courtesy treatise defined that 'the Minds of *beau Monde*' were 'always more Sensible than Reasonable',²¹² Cavendish's true gentleman was 'a man that is not outwardly Formal, but inwardly Rational'.²¹³

In Cavendish's analysis there were two wholly different kinds of duels. On the one hand, there were the erroneous duels fought, if at all, by those who slavishly succumbed to current modes and fashions – who were 'Couragious or Cowardly according to the Mode'. On the other hand, there were duels fought by true gentlemen who despised current modes and fashions, but who were constant in their values and who were always ready to fight 'for Honour'. Cavendish thus separated duelling from prevalent trends of civility. In her view the ideology to which a true duel of honour belonged stood in stark contrast to recent trends in civility. These trends only perpetuated utterly corrupted forms of duelling. Their reasons were negligible; the underlying notions of valour and courage were skewed; and their actual form of fighting with pistols was perverted.

A similar account can be found in Henry Payne's comedy *The morning ramble, or, the town-humours* (1673). A central theme of the play is to hold 'Town Gallants' up to ridicule for pretending to be valorous and thus

²¹¹ Ibid., pp. 131–4. ²¹² [Anon.], *The polite gentleman*, pp. 74, 103.

²¹³ Cavendish, *Sociable letters*, p. 107.

willing to issue challenges, but then prevaricating, as soon as they were expected to fight. Ruffle is the character in the play who realises that he is a coward, but wants to hide his true nature. He has, he confesses, 'a foolish desire to be thought valiant, and so I must still be picking Quarrels'. But he is careful to do this 'with all I think like my self', in order to avoid the actual fight.²¹⁴

Accordingly, Ruffle challenges Muchland, whom he assumes to be like himself. But he wants to play safe and asks his friends, Breef and Fullam, to follow Muchland and to 'appear as taking his part against me, place it upon him, as if he had hir'd you; thus our Quarrel will end, and you shall have your money'. Breef and Fullam, however, misunderstand their task and assume that they are expected to kill Muchland. But, of course, Ruffle shuns such an idea and explains his attitude towards duelling:

why, I ne're desir'd the Death of any Man in my Life, and wonder at those they call Men of true Honour, that make no more of killing a Man for refusing a Health, then I do to eat my Break-fast: Yet, since the Town praises these hare-brains as Men of worth, I have a huge ambition to be thought one of e'm.

What Ruffle is aiming at is to obtain the reputation of a duellist, 'without the danger of my self or Antagonist'.²¹⁵

When Ruffle arrives at Hyde Park, but cannot find Muchland, he declares that 'two to one he dares not'. But then it occurs to him that he still has to pay for Breef and Fullam for preventing the duel, and regrets 'that we heartless men can't know one another by sympathy'. But when Muchland finally turns up alone Ruffle is at his wits' end how to avoid the fight. 'I think', he surmises by himself, 'I had best fall to Queries about the Quarrel – a way many a Young Gallant hath prevented the pinking his Doublet by.' But he also has the feeling that 'the danger makes me think I dare fight' because 'it is but dying, and that I must do at last in spite of my teeth'. Consequently, they start to fight but in the end Breef and Fullam appear and, although they successfully prevent the duel, they also reveal Ruffle's entire scheme. Muchland, who is a genuine duellist, presses Ruffle to fight, declaring that 'since these Rogues have plac'd a scandal on you, wipe it off; come to your Sword'. Ruffle refuses and discloses that he is a coward.²¹⁶ The whole play ends with Ruffle singing:

We are Gallants of the Town,
Men of sprightly Breeding:
If Oaths will do't, we run e'm down,
But never come to Bleeding.

²¹⁴ [Henry Payne], *The morning ramble, or, the town-humours: a comedy* (London, 1673), p. 30.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–2. ²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 56–9, 67–8.

The chorus then responds:

We measure Swords, appoint the place, and thither do repair too;
But Drink, Huft, Kick, Cuff; this is all we dare do.²¹⁷

Payne was holding up to ridicule the glaring discrepancy between the town gallant's desire to appear as a man of honour and his total failure to behave accordingly. Ruffle does not understand the rationale of duelling at all; he is merely trying to earn the reputation of a man of honour in issuing challenges. The irony is even further intensified by the fact that it is a woman who reveals the hollowness of a town gallant's valour. As Rose, a female character in the play, says, 'to play the part of a right Town Gallant, raise Quarrels, and then prevent them by Discovery, this is the way most Men find Honour now adayes'.²¹⁸ Town gallants' penchant for duelling is thus illusory; they pretend to be men of honour but in fact think themselves bound 'by the Religious Rules of self-preservation to prevent' the duel. In the end, they are, as Rose points out, always 'made Friends' before they fight, and 'their meek Dove-like Honour' is still said to be 'safe'.²¹⁹ There is thus a very similar dichotomy between town gallants and true gentlemen as there was in Cavendish's account. Ruffle with his completely perverted notion of reputation is, of course, one of these town gallants, who with their 'Dove-like Honour' and their Christian principles are meant to stand as a counter-image of true gentlemen, of their honour and of their willingness to defend it by their swords, despite the teachings of Christ.

By the 1670s this interpretation of duelling seemed to have gained wide currency.²²⁰ The anonymous *Character of a town-gallant* promised in 1675 to expose 'the extravagant fopperies' of the age. A fop was not only a dandy and a womaniser; he had a library which consisted of 'the *Academy of Complements*, *Venus undress'd*, *Westminster Drollers*, half a dozen *Plays*, and a Bundle of *Bawdy Songs* in *Manuscript*'. His '*Hangers on* call him Man of *Bloud*', yet 'he never was in any Service but building Sconces; nor *Duel*, but with his own Foot-boy'.²²¹

It was exactly at this time that a fierce anti-French temper gathered force in England. Underlying it were, of course, the changes in the international political scene and the growing danger of French expansionism. But while the anti-French sentiments had heavy political and religious

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–3. ²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55. ²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²²⁰ See e.g. H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 44–45, 67; Samuel Vincent, *The young gallant's academy. Or, directions how he should behave himself in all places and company* (London, 1674), pp. 90–4.

²²¹ [Anon.], *The character of a town-gallant* (London, 1675), pp. 2, 4–5. See in general Foyster 1999a, p. 165.

overtones, they also included ideological and cultural undercurrents. It became increasingly common to censure not only French bribes and mistresses but also French customs and fashion.²²² Soon the polarisation between the true and false duel was included in this anti-French campaigning. Although duelling as such was often seen as a particularly French vice, a growing number of its ideological apologists averred that the French influence was corrupting its true forms.

In William Wycherley's comedy, *The gentleman dancing-master* (1673), the irony is directed to the alleged combination of the foppish civility and the touchiness of the French. Monsieur De Paris, who had recently returned from France, and was 'mightily affected with the *French* language and Fashions', declares that 'I vill maintain, sustain, and justifie dat one little French Foot-man have more honeur, courage, and generosity; more good blood in his vaineè, an' mush more good manners an' civility den all de State General togedèr.'²²³

From this juxtaposition between the French fop or beau whose courage turned out to be thoroughly hollow and the true gentleman who was the embodiment of true courage, it was only a short step to associate the former with Jacobites. In the anonymous *The character of the beaux* (1696), to which was appended the character of a 'Jacobite', fops or beaux were, of course, French. A beau's central characteristic was that although he was nothing but 'a damn'd Coward', he always wanted to appear the opposite and was inclined to issue challenges, yet, in such a skilful way that he never had to fight. The beau drew 'his Sword, and quarrelling with every Body; but to be sure, either in the *Park*, at the *Play-House*, or some other open populous place, where he knows he shall be parted'.²²⁴

This binary model of foppery and duelling was especially conspicuous in several plays. George Farquhar presented a strong juxtaposition between the beaux and duelling in *The constant couple*, where Colonel Standard attempts to challenge a beau, Sir Henry Wildair. But Wildair makes every effort to avoid the duel, maintaining that he is no coward but a true gentleman because 'I am a Baronet, and have eight thousand Pounds a Year. I can dance, sing, ride, fence, understand the Languages.' When Standard insists that being a gentleman entails readiness to duel and, furthermore, that Wildair has both been a soldier and fought a duel,

²²² For anti-French sentiments in general see Pincus 1996, pp. 351–68; Pincus 1998, especially pp. 81–3. For the ideological and cultural dimensions see Pincus 1995a, pp. 46–8; Pincus 1995b, pp. 358–9.

²²³ William Wycherley, *The gentleman dancing-master. A comedy, acted at the Duke's Theatre* (London, 1673), p. 13.

²²⁴ [Anon.], *The character of the beaux. In five parts* (London, 1696), pp. 9–10, 18–22.

Wildair replies that that was only 'Because 'twas fashionable' and his opponent 'was Beau, like myself'. The present situation is a different matter altogether, because Standard is 'a Soldier, Colonel, and Fighting's your Trade'.²²⁵ Standard with all his seriousness is the obvious laughing-stock in the play, but Wildair as a beau provokes laughter as well. He does not want to fight a duel, posing the question 'if Ladies were to be gain'd by Sword and Pistol only, what the Devil should all the Beaux do?'²²⁶ But neither does he understand the duelling theory at all. He tells Standard: 'I can't conceive how running you through the Body shou'd contribute one Jot more to my Gentility.'²²⁷

These same issues of French foppery and true gentlemanly character and the duel's role in them came even more strongly to the fore in Susannah Centlivre's plays – above all in *The beau's duel* (1702), which focuses on duelling, its true and perverted forms. Within the framework of the play and its interpretation of duelling, its title was an oxymoron. In Centlivre's interpretation a beau and a duel were each other's opposites. The beau is the very person who, whilst perhaps pretending that he wanted to fight a duel – he was after all carrying a sword – was precisely trying at all costs to avoid it. In *The beau's duel* we have a strong contrast between duelling on the one hand and modern gallantry and politeness on the other. Centlivre's basic argument was thus that whereas the true gentleman was always ready to defend his honour and thus to fight a duel, a beau was always a coward, and wanted, if at all, merely to profess an appearance of a man of valour and courage.

Centlivre's depiction of a beau was a highly ironic image of the ideal gentleman or courtier described in civility and politeness treatises. The beau was above all interested in his appearance. The beau was 'a meer Compound of Powder, Paint and Affectation'. Most importantly, he wanted to 'distinguish himself' as much 'by his Expressions, as by his Coach and Livery' from 'the Vulgar', whom he found 'unpolish'd'. Ogle, a beau and a fop in the play, thinks that seeing and being seen is everything. Hence, he claims to know Clarinda, a female character in the play, well, because, although he has not talked to her, he has seen her. 'Why', he poses the rhetorical question, 'is it not possible to be acquainted without speaking?' Ogle was thus an epitome of the contemporary account of a civil and polite gentleman, of a gentleman who placed his complaisant and polite exterior before everything else. It hardly comes as a surprise

²²⁵ George Farquhar, *The constant couple. Or a trip to the jubilee. A comedy*, 2nd edn (London, 1700), pp. 22–3, 32–3.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6. ²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

that Ogle has acquired his civility and politeness in Paris, where he has recently made a tour, receiving 'such extraordinary Marks of Civility from the *French Court*'.²²⁸

It was incumbent on gentlemen in general and beaux in particular to wear a sword. According to another beau in the play, Sir William Mode, he could use his sword to kill a vulgar man for just spoiling his clothes.²²⁹ Again, however, beaux were depicted as men who perhaps wanted to have the image of valorous men but who in reality were cowards, who could not face a duel and who went to extreme lengths to avoid it: 'Fight, no, no, he hates the sight of a drawn Sword . . . He will sometimes pretend to Courage, as some Women will to Honour and Honesty, tho' their Inclinations tend to neither.'²³⁰ When Sir William receives a challenge he not only distinguishes between the 'Men of the Sword' and the 'Beau's', but he immediately refuses to fight. He is therefore more than happy to take up the suggestion that he should propose to fight the duel 'on *Callice Sands*' on the assumption that the opponent would 'hardly be at the trouble of going over'.²³¹ Later in the play Clarinda reveals that she sent the challenge to Sir William, in order to prove that Sir William is a coward and hence wholly unsuitable to court her.²³² In another play Centlivre pointed out that 'the Beaux usually take a greater liberty with our sex than they would with their own, because there's no fear of drawing a Duel upon their hands'.²³³

Both beaux, Ogle and Sir William, are courting Clarinda. Topper, a drunk rascal, therefore suggests to Ogle that he should challenge Sir William, because 'he call'd you Fop, Blockhead, Baboon – and said he'd make mince Meat of you'. Topper argues that 'had any Man said so much of me, I wou'd have made the Sun shone through him; and I think you ought to send him a Challenge'. Ogle hedges, saying 'what, Challenge my Friend?'. But Topper is adamant; a gentleman must 'resent an Affront' even if it comes from a friend. Ogle still quibbles, claiming that, surely, Sir William had not meant it as an affront. Although Ogle alleges that 'I dare fight any Man', Topper is able to persuade him to send the challenge only on the condition that he will intervene and separate them. When

²²⁸ Susannah Centlivre, *The beau's duel: or a soldier for the ladies* (London, 1702), pp. 8, 12, 17, 41–2, 46. See also Susannah Centlivre, *The basset-table. A comedy* (London, 1706), p. 8; Susannah Centlivre, *Love's contrivance, or, le medecin malgré lui. A comedy* (London, 1703), p. 48. For Centlivre see Bowyer 1952.

²²⁹ Centlivre, *The beau's duel*, pp. 12–13. ²³⁰ Ibid., p. 8. ²³¹ Ibid., pp. 14–15.

²³² Ibid., p. 27. See also Susannah Centlivre, *Love at venture. A comedy* (London, 1706), p. 44.

²³³ Susannah Centlivre, *The perjur'd husband: or, the adventures of Venice. A tragedy* (London, 1700), sig. [A3^r].

Sir William receives the challenge he expressed equally strong distaste of duelling as Ogle and says to himself: 'I hate fighting, but dare not tell this blustering Fellow so.'

When they finally meet they do not want to fight but want desperately to pretend to do so. Ogle thinks that this is 'an Admirable Contrivance', because when the world hears of their 'Duel' they will be recognised as men of honour. Sir William agrees, noting that 'a Gentleman ought to wear a Sharp for a terror to the Vulgar, and because 'tis the Fashion; but he shou'd never use it but as an Ornament, and part of his Dress, I hope to see it as much a Fashion to Fight with Files, as 'tis to Fence with them'. He is certain that he is not alone in his resentment about duelling. 'A Bill against Duelling', he surmises, 'would pass, for there's a Majority in the House of my Constitution.'²³⁴ With a direct reference to Cavendish's notion of 'Active Valour', which men could only exhibit in a duel with rapiers, Sir William notes that 'Passive Valour fits well enough upon Men that have Estates, and have a Mind to live and enjoy them.' In his scheme of things, duelling is no part of gentlemanly qualities. 'To sing, dance, or Court a Lady' are true 'Gentleman-like Employments', whereas 'this slovenly Exercise of Fighting' he would never endure.²³⁵

Just like Cavendish, Centlivre unequivocally took the side of duelling. Whereas beaux and fops merely pretended to be valorous but in truth wanted to avoid a duel at all costs, being ready to accept even a bill against duelling, a true gentleman was always ready to demonstrate his courage by fighting a duel. At the very beginning of the play Colonel Manly, who has been called 'an honest Fellow, and a Man of Honour', is, in striking contrast to Ogle, ready to issue a challenge to his friend because his friend has been 'so free' with the woman with whom Manly is in love.²³⁶

The most raucous laughter was provoked by the fact that even women despised beaux who refused to fight a duel and admired men of honour who were willing to defend their honour. When Ogle and Sir William are putting up their show-duel, Clarinda, together with her cousin Emilia, both dressed as men, appear on the scene. The men start to explain the foolishness of duelling, but the women disagree. Clarinda declares that 'he that wou'd not draw a Sword upon any Just Account, should be kick'd thus', and then they kick the beaux and wiggle their ears. Manly sees the whole incident and tells Sir William that 'if this News reaches your Mistress's Ears, it will ruin you in her Favour'. 'Take this for a Rule', he goes on, 'the less regard you have for your Honour the more you sink in

²³⁴ Centlivre, *The beau's duel*, pp. 21–5, 29–30.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the Esteem of your Mistress, for all Women hate a Coward; you ought to be forbid the Habits of Men, who can be guilty of Effeminacy that even Women would blush at.' When Clarinda's father still plans to marry her to Sir William, she asks 'where's the Honour of such a Husband? I hope Sir you will not Marry me to a Coward; why there's not a needy Bully about Town but will beat a Maintenance out of him, and where is the Reputation of such a Marriage?'²³⁷ However, it is only when Manly steals Clarinda, at her behest, from Sir William that her father is convinced. Harping on the generational theme, he tells Sir William: 'let a Man take your Mistress from you! In my Conscience, young Fellows are so rotten now a-days, they are afraid of every Scuffle.'²³⁸

Centlivre's account of duelling was based on the same strong dichotomy between beaux and true gentlemen as Cavendish's and Payne's accounts. Whereas the former were cowards who merely pretended to be men of honour, the latter were valorous and thus ready to issue challenges and fight duels. Centlivre's account was underpinned by the same notion of the true gentleman as Cavendish's. They both argued that it was above all soldiers who were ready to fight a duel and thus to live up to the standards of the men of honour. Duelling had often been linked with soldiers, as attested by Thomas Churchyard in the 1590s and William Sprigg in the 1650s.²³⁹ Nonetheless, Centlivre's account also reflected the recent dramatic changes in English foreign policy and the concomitant enhancement of the importance of soldiery after 1689. The two heroes in *The beau's duel*, Colonel Manly and his friend Captain Bellmein, are both of course officers. The precarious novelty of a soldier gentleman is well brought out in the play. Sir William endeavours to distance himself from soldiers, hoping that 'the World will distinguish the difference between a rough, unhewn Soldier, and a pollish'd Gentleman'. Similarly, Clarinda's father, when he finds out about Manly and Clarinda, complains that 'my Daughter is running mad after a Soldier, a Fellow whose Fortunes depend upon his Sword'.²⁴⁰ But later on he realises that only soldiers can show any real courage. In the epilogue Centlivre admits that:

Since Virtue here has been her only Aim:
The Beaux, she thinks, won't fail to do her Right,
Since here they're taught with safety how to Fight.
She's sure of Favour from the Men of War,
A Soldier is her Darling Character; . . .²⁴¹

²³⁷ Ibid., pp. 29–31, 33. ²³⁸ Ibid., pp. 44–5.

²³⁹ [William Sprigg], *Philosophicall essayes with brief advise's* (London, 1652), pp. 78–9.

²⁴⁰ Centlivre, *The beau's duel*, pp. 39, 36. ²⁴¹ Ibid., sig. H 4^v.

Centlivre developed this account by applying national stereotypes to this juxtaposition between the beau and the true duelling gentleman. What emerges from Centlivre's assessment is not merely the close connection between duelling and soldiers; she is also adamant, as befits a Whig, to link beaux such as Sir William and Ogle with France on the one hand, and soldiers as the men of true honour with Britain on the other. As we have seen, Ogle has learned 'extraordinary Marks of Civility from the *French Court*'. In the epilogue of the play Centlivre declaims:

You see, Gallants, 't has been our Poets Care
To shew what Beaux in their Perfection are,
By Nature *Cowards, foolish, useless Tools*,
Made Men by Taylors, and by Women, Fools:
A Fickle, False, a Singing, Dancing Crew,
Nay now we hear they've *Smiling Masters* too;
Just now a *Frenchman* in the Dressing Room,
From Teaching of a Beau to Smile, was come, . . . ²⁴²

This contrasted sharply with the prologue, ostensibly written 'by a Gentleman', where courage and valour, honour and the readiness to defend it were all linked with ancient Britishness:

Our Female Author, tho' she sees what Fate
Does the Event of such Attempts still want;
With a true Brittish Courage venters on,
Thinks nothing Honour, without Danger won.
She fain wou'd shew our great Fore-father's Days,
When Vertue, Honour, Courage, wore the Bays. ²⁴³

In both Cavendish's and Centlivre's accounts duelling was dissociated from the culture of courtly politeness and civility. The main difference between their analyses was that in the latter duelling is not merely separated from its usual French connection; it was presented as an openly anti-French phenomenon and was closely associated with typical British courage and valour. The volte-face was thus complete. What had always been perceived as a foreign import was now said to be inherently English. For a long time the image of duelling had predominantly been a fashionable foreign import. In the late sixteenth century the indigenous chivalric combat had been offered as a counter-image to these modish fights brought from Italy and France. Now, duelling was separated from this foreign connection and given a home-bred attire. It was not the predominantly French polite culture of the court but rather the relatively

²⁴² Ibid., sig. H4^v. ²⁴³ Ibid., sig. A4^r.

uncultivated culture of indigenous valour and courage which was now said to nurture the values of duelling. As the Whig pamphleteer John Tutchin argued in 1704, although 'a perfect *Beau*' often sent a challenge, there was nothing to be feared, because 'those Bullies seldom Fight'.²⁴⁴

It was essentially this interpretation with which duelling was justified in the aftermath of what was perhaps the most famous duel in British history – the duel between the duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun, fought on 15 November 1712.²⁴⁵ Because of the widespread rumour and accusation that Mohun's second, General Maccartney, had in fact fomented the entire duel and, moreover, killed Hamilton, two fellow Whigs, Abel Boyer and John Oldmixon, came forward, albeit under the protection of anonymity, in defence of the general's conduct. Boyer wanted to expel all the accusations against both Mohun and Maccartney, but at the same time he also aimed at excusing duelling more generally. Of course, he admitted, 'this Custom of Barbarous and *Gothick* Original' was 'diametrically opposite and repugnant to the Precepts of Christianity'. Yet, duelling had not only been 'Tolerated' but even sometimes 'Authorized, in most Kingdoms and States of Christendom'. More importantly, as the matters stood, duelling was a necessity. As Boyer argued, 'as long as Men are subject to the Passions of Pride, Ambition, Anger and Revenge, . . . and as long as the *Punctilios* of *Honour* are cherish'd and indulg'd as the Distinguishing Character of a Gentleman' it was useless to try to abolish duelling.²⁴⁶

Similarly, Oldmixon tried to refute all the accusations against Maccartney as groundless, giving a short historical account of Maccartney's 'Services and Preferments'. Moreover, he was keen to argue that a man of honour could not 'refuse to be a Second'. According to his scheme of things, it was 'the greatest Honour' to be asked to be someone's second. Even if the principal was not one's close friend, Oldmixon declared, 'I don't see how I cou'd in Humanity refuse him.' Much less, therefore was it possible to decline a friend, in which case 'it becomes a Duty'. Furthermore, seconds were there to guarantee fair play and above all to staunch the unnecessary flow of blood.²⁴⁷ The point was of course that it was preposterous to accuse Maccartney of killing Hamilton.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ [John Tutchin], *The Observer*, III, no. 4, 5 April 1704.

²⁴⁵ For Mohun–Hamilton duel and its background see Stater 1999.

²⁴⁶ [Abel Boyer], *A true and impartial account of the animosity, quarrel and duel, between the late duke of Hamilton, and the Lord Mohun* (London, 1712), pp. 16–21.

²⁴⁷ [John Oldmixon], *A defence of Mr. Maccartney. By a friend* (London, 1712), pp. 7–8.

²⁴⁸ For Maccartney's own views see George Maccartney, *A letter from Mr. Maccartney to a friend of his in London* (London, 1713).

As well as defending seconds in general and Maccartney in particular, Oldmixon endeavoured to justify duelling. His point of departure was that the claim – ‘No Man of Honour can avoid a Duel’ – was ‘so receiv’d an Opinion’ that it hardly needed any defence. Of course, he had ‘heard many argue against Duels’, but these very same persons had still practised duelling ‘on this very Argument’. The truth of the proposition, Oldmixon maintained, could easily be proved by the simple fact that ‘no Nation’ where duelling had been practised ‘have been able to prevent them’. But if this was indeed the case, gentlemen should be given free hand to fight duels. Oldmixon wrote:

If the several Legislature of *Europe* have not been able to find a Remedy for this Evil, nor no way of making injured Honour an ample Reparation, then a Man of Honour has no other recourse but to a Duel, or live under a Blemish’d Reputation: Such a Man must at all Hazards justify himself, and the Law should wink at such Misfortunes it can’t with Justice prevent or repair.²⁴⁹

An important part of Oldmixon’s argument was, thus, the idea that even if duelling had been iniquitous and wrong, it would nevertheless be impossible to stop it. The French had made ‘the best Efforts’ to prevent duelling and had published several severe edicts against it. But to no avail, for as soon as a new edict had been published, they have been ‘forc’d to wink at them’. Of course Louis XIV had managed to curb if not to prevent duelling altogether. By his reign ‘the Enormity of Duels’ had become ‘outrageous’. ‘Parties fought by Tens and Twenties of a Side.’ By inflicting severe punishments on a few ‘Persons of Distinction’, Louis had been able to check duelling.²⁵⁰

Nevertheless, Oldmixon was convinced that even such stern measures would in the end turn out to be futile, and thus any attempt to put paid to duelling altogether was doomed to fail. Despite Louis’s strenuous efforts, duelling had in fact continued almost unimpeded. Oldmixon wrote: ‘Will any one tell me that a Stop is put to Duels; I own, the Formality of them is in a great measure hinder’d, as well as the Number engag’d. Yet is there in *Europe* a Country where more frequent Combats are heard of, which evade the Edict by the softer Name of Re-encounters?’ But in Britain, unlike in France, duelling had never got out of hand. Of course, there had been a time when ‘the Quarrels of Noblemen’ had ‘been prosecuted by Intestine Wars by them and their Vassals’. But this had not occurred

²⁴⁹ [Oldmixon], *A defence*, pp. 2–3. See also [anon.], *A hint on duelling, in a letter to a friend*, 2nd edn (London, 1752), p. 9; [Webster], *A casuistical essay*, p. 77.

²⁵⁰ [Oldmixon], *A defence*, pp. 3–4.

in England 'since the *Saxons*', and even in Scotland at least 'the Union', if nothing else, had 'put an end to the wars of *Clans*'. It followed that there was no need in Britain for such stern measures.²⁵¹

Oldmixon's main argument for allowing gentlemen to defend their honour was exactly the same as Centlivre's. Duelling, he claimed, played an important positive role as a social institution. Even if duelling was sometimes a menace, there was one particular situation where it must always be considered as highly desirable. 'However inexcusable it is for private Men, in regular Governments, to be Judges and Arbitrators of their own Wrongs', it was nothing short 'of absolute Necessity' for soldiers that 'Duels shou'd not be forbid'. It was precisely for this reason, Oldmixon alleged, that Charles II had tolerated duelling.²⁵²

Why was duelling so necessary for soldiers? Oldmixon's answer came in two parts. First, it nurtured the values of honour, which were of crucial importance for a soldier. His profession was to fight for the honour of his country. But this was impossible if the soldier neglected his own personal honour. 'A Soldier is of no Esteem, if he does not sacrifice all Considerations to his Honour.' These considerations were even more important for the officer, who was widely thought to be unable to defend his country's honour and to do any service if he overlooked his own honour.²⁵³ William Machrie defended duelling against 'Isaac Bickerstaff' on similar grounds, noting that 'he who sits with an affront in our days, is heinously Guilty before GOD... [and] thought to be a Man of no Courage'; he was 'not fit to be Trusted in any Ecclesiastical Order or Post, not fit to serve the Common Wealth as a Souldier'.²⁵⁴

But Oldmixon's second argument for the necessity of duelling for soldiers meant a further development of this British image of duelling. As well as enhancing their sense of honour, duelling also fostered soldiers' sense of civility and politeness, which were hardly less significant qualities for them than honour. But civility and politeness were essential parts of the court. Duelling, Oldmixon emphasised, 'cultivates an Ingenuous and Modest Expression, checks Impertinence and Misbehaviour, and softens the Roughness of a Camp to the Politeness of a Court'.²⁵⁵ The civilising effects of duelling did not entail, however, imitating the French example. Although Oldmixon thus saw duelling and politeness closely entangled, he did not link duelling with the French ideology of politeness. Far from

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4. ²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9. ²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

²⁵⁴ William Machrie, *An essay upon duelling* (n.p. [Edinburgh], 1711), p. 14.

²⁵⁵ [Oldmixon], *A defence*, p. 8. See also John Oldmixon, *Reflections on the stage, and Mr. Collyer's defence of the short view. In four dialogues* (London, 1699), pp. 170–2.

being part of the highly articulate life-style of the urban gentleman, Oldmixon regarded duelling as a custom of the sturdy and honest, firm and upright British gentleman.

This brings us to the most important point of all in Oldmixon's account. Duelling could cultivate civility and turn rough soldiers into polite courtiers. But it did not prompt them to renounce their native ideological traditions and embrace foreign delicate habits. Above all, becoming polite courtiers did not mean succumbing to the temptations of French absolutism. On the contrary, the true forms of duelling went hand in hand with the political and legal traditions of Britain in general and England in particular. Even if Louis had been able to prevent duelling altogether, Oldmixon was far from sure that he wanted to see this happen in Britain. In 1675 an MP had pointed out that 'in *France* there are edicts against duels, but that will stand with arbitrary government only'.²⁵⁶ Oldmixon concurred. Louis's partial success in stymieing duelling could be accounted for by the fact that 'his Power was Arbitrary, and his Will a Law'. To curb duelling thus presupposed arbitrary government, and Oldmixon detested any such plans. 'I hope we of *Great-Britain*', he argued, 'shall draw no Conclusions, not even right ones, from Despotick Power, lest flattering it where it may possibly be once in the Right, we run into a Million of Errors, to the destruction of our Constitution.' So the opponents of duelling were left with a stark choice between either giving up their opposition and accepting duelling, however grudgingly, or supporting an arbitrary form of government.²⁵⁷

The ancient constitution and duelling went thus hand in hand. In order to abolish duelling the ancient constitution had to be abolished and an arbitrary government set in its place. This is exactly what had once happened in England with drastic consequences. The only time duelling had been efficiently curbed in England had occurred when 'the Usurpers, after the Death of King Charles the Ist, made it [i.e. duelling] one of the First Abuses which they pretended to reform'. But the backlash had soon followed and 'after the Restoration, Duels were more practis'd in England than ever'. Of course, attempts had been made even thereafter to prevent duels, but all of them had been abortive.

²⁵⁶ *Debates of the House of Commons, from the year 1667 to the year 1694*, ed. Anchitel Grey (10 vols., London, 1763), III, p. 339; but Sir Richard Temple argued that 'the great occasion of duels is, that the law gives not remedy proportionable to injuries received. In *France* a strict course is taken to repair men in their honour, wherein the law is defective; as 'tis in some things men highly esteem, as affrontive words', p. 341.

²⁵⁷ [Oldmixon], *A defence*, pp. 3-4.

Charles II continued to pardon duellists, despite issuing proclamations to the contrary. Whereas the fop Sir William Mode in Centlivre's *The beau's duel* claimed that the House of Commons would pass anti-duelling legislation, Oldmixon pointed out that every bill against duelling had in fact miscarried in the House of Commons. Even the MP who introduced the anti-duelling bill of 1711 admitted, according to Oldmixon, 'That 'twas impracticable and no Law could be made to hinder Duels, which would not be more mischievous than Duels themselves.'²⁵⁸

If the ancient constitution was confirmed by long custom and the best opinion, so, too, was duelling. According to Oldmixon, 'custom has made it necessary; and a Custom confirm'd by the Consent of almost a Thousand Years; as well as the Opinion of the best and greatest Men of our own Age'. In the latter case it was the opinion of one no less than William III which Oldmixon found favouring duelling. In so far as the ancient custom was concerned, Oldmixon's argument was based on two premises. First, he equated trial by combat with the duel of honour. Secondly, he assumed that trial by combat was brought to England by the Saxons. Whereas in their account of trial by combat the Elizabethan antiquaries had condemned the duel of honour, Oldmixon used the same argument to defend duelling. Consequently, duelling became part of the cultural legacy of English history in general and the ancient constitution in particular.

Little wonder then that in England there was 'no express Law against Duels'. Therefore, duelling was not illegal; as a matter of fact, it was *legal*. 'If we look into the Law of combat', Oldmixon pointed out, 'we shall find many Instances, where even the Law countenances it.' The civil law justified a trial by combat in certain cases; much more so did the English law. It was confirmed by long custom and by an act of parliament (from the reign of Edward I). Therefore, 'all our common Lawyers' agree that, as a law dictionary put it, '*Tho' this sort of Combat is disus'd, the Law is still in Force*'. The same is confirmed by 'our Ancient Histories' which 'are full of this Subject'. Oldmixon was of course aware that a trial by combat was one thing and a duel of honour quite another, but, he claimed, 'they only differ in Points and Niceties'. Hence, if trial by combat was legal, so was the duel of honour.²⁵⁹

In Oldmixon's account, duelling thus became British with a vengeance. What had always been seen as a foreign influence in general and as an essential part of first Italian then French courtly civility in particular,

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-7. See also Machrie, *An essay upon duelling*, p. 8.

was now claimed to be a central element in the ancient indigenous English and British culture. Duelling, in one form or another, had been practised in Britain for a thousand years; it was affirmed as well by an old custom as by an act of parliament; it was upheld both by historians and common lawyers; and the only way to efficiently prevent it would be to imitate the French and to set up an arbitrary government. Moreover, it was said to enhance the level of politeness – to turn rough soldiers into polite courtiers. Of course, Oldmixon acknowledged, ‘a true *Briton*’s great Soul is above the Meanness of Revenge; he rather scorns than punishes an Injury’. Nonetheless, he was always ready to fight a duel when the occasion required. ‘If his Honour be too grosly touch’d’, Oldmixon went on, ‘with his own Hand he rights it, fairly opposing his Adversary Person to Person, and with equal Weapons; he no sooner has justify’d his Honour . . . than the Offender is forgiven.’ Of course, the consequences could be fatal; ‘desperate Wounds and Death are often the Consequences of such Disputes, but’ these were ‘not done for *Anger* but for *Honour*’.²⁶⁰

Duelling and concomitant civility had not only become British; they had been turned into central components in the larger process of building the self-image of the upright British gentleman. In his eulogy of British valour, *A divine and moral essay on courage, its rise and progress*, published after the battle of Ramillies (1706), John Macqueen examined these themes in detail. Of all the virtues, he argued, courage commanded the greatest admiration and it was the best means of winning fame and honour.²⁶¹ The recent victories of the British army had amply demonstrated this. Although the enemy had been valorous as well, it had not been any real match for British courage. This hinged above all on two qualities. First courage required certain natural ‘hardy Constitutions’. More importantly, it required the social and political conditions of freedom. Both requirements had occurred in Britain – ‘our *Islands* [are] *Nurseries* of brave Men, *Seminaries* of expert Warriors, *Academies* of noble Champions’, as Macqueen put it. In Britain the people of ‘hardy Constitutions’ and ‘the great Liberty [of] our well-temper’d Government’ brought about an unprecedented amount of courage and valour.²⁶² The values of valour and courage were inculcated in the minds of young Britons through ‘a free way of Education, which made them independent and brave’.

²⁶⁰ Oldmixon, *A defence*, pp. 5–7.

²⁶¹ John Macqueen, *A divine and moral essay on courage, its rise and progress: with some reflections on the causes of British valour* (London, 1707), pp. 7–9, 1, 13–15, 23. See also John Macqueen, *British valour triumphing over French courage* (London, 1715).

²⁶² Macqueen, *A divine*, pp. 43–4.

All this contrasted sharply with 'the servile Way, the immoderate Corrections' and 'the severe Threatnings' of 'insulting Masters' in other places of the world, which were said to be 'very unfit for any Exercises of Valour'. This servile education resulted in 'an Arbitrary Power and Tyrannical Government', which quickly effeminated any signs of valour and courage.²⁶³

The combination of natural qualities, free education and a well-tempered government, Macqueen claimed, stood behind the stupendous victories of British arms. More generally, it brought about the true British gentleman who had acquired 'all the Parts of Polite Learning, and all Gentleman-like Employments'. This gentleman united 'the Piety of a Divine with the Policy of a Statesman, the Devotion of a Regular with the Debonairness of a Courtier'.²⁶⁴ Similarly, John Littleton Costeker argued in the early 1730s that 'the Army is a fine Academy' and claimed that the British court was in fact a better 'residence of Politeness' than the French one and 'our young Gentlemen would... be perfect Masters in their exterior'.²⁶⁵ According to Macqueen, this perfect British gentleman who, with the help of a free education and a well-tempered government combined a natural courage and a high sense of delicate politeness, knew the details of the duelling code and was always ready to put them into practice. The 'Courtier's Vocation', Macqueen wrote in his essay on honour, consisted of 'Complaisance', 'the Laws of civil Conversation, ... the Rules of good Manners', as well as of the 'Softness or Sweetness of Address'.²⁶⁶ Little wonder then that the 'Conversation' of gentlemen like this bore amongst other things 'all the Characters ... of a Courteous and Civil', so much so that they always stood much upon and vied with others about 'the Punctilio's of Honour'.²⁶⁷ Duelling and courtly civility, courage and honour were parts of and nurtured by British liberty. It is not too much to say that this line of argument had become a Whig defence of duelling.

When the early eighteenth-century anti-duelling campaign reached its zenith in April 1720 and the House of Commons was about to have

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–2. ²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–1, 33.

²⁶⁵ John Littleton Costeker, *The fine gentleman: or, the compleat education of a young nobleman* (London, 1732), pp. 44–5, 50–1. See also e.g. [William Darrell], *The gentleman instructed, in the conduct of a virtuous and happy life*, 8th edn (London, 1723), p. 175, where the soldier and the courtier was one and same person. For a contrary view which juxtaposes the army and the court see e.g. [anon.], *The soldiers glory, or the honour of a military life* (London, 1687?).

²⁶⁶ John Macqueen, *An essay on honour* (London, 1711), pp. 121, 146, 158.

²⁶⁷ Macqueen, *A divine*, p. 33.

its third reading of the anti-duelling bill, an anonymous advocate of duelling harped on this same image in his published letter addressed 'to a Member of the House of Commons'. The matter was of 'utmost Importance' simply because 'the Honour and Estate of every Family in *Great Britain* may One Day or other be Affected by a Bill of this kind'. The anonymous author thus promised to 'consider *Duels* in general; how far they are indulged as the Law now stands' and most importantly 'what are the Inconveniencies chiefly to be dreaded in making a *new* Law to prevent them'.²⁶⁸ Such an assessment provided a full-scale defence of duelling.

Just like many defenders of duelling before him, the anonymous author felt he had to address the issue of the obvious unchristian character of duelling. He decided to do this by claiming that 'I am very far from designing to turn Advocate for a Practice which seems pretty unaccountable in a *Christian Country*.' Yet, he continued, 'it will require a more than ordinary *Judgment* and *Address* to apply a proper Remedy'.²⁶⁹ This was something of an understatement because he thought not only that there was no 'proper Remedy' for duelling but also that there was no need for one. As matters stood, duelling played a necessary role in British society, so much so that religious considerations had to be set aside.

Furthermore, he challenged the relevance of the Roman example which had been a staple argument amongst the anti-duelling writers. Of course, there had not been any duels in ancient Rome, despite 'all their *Personal Animositities* which were kept up and heightened by their Popular Elections, and the manner of passing their Laws'. But in its stead the Romans had used much more sinister '*Poisonings* and *Assassinations*'. This would also happen in Britain if duels were totally prohibited. Again, however, such '*horrid sort of Villany*' perhaps suited such contemporary people as 'the *Spaniards* or *Italians*'. But such crooked custom was in sharp contrast with 'that *Generous Courage* and *Good Nature* which is natural to the *English*'.²⁷⁰

The author was, of course, aware that 'most Civiliz'd Nations have thought fit to inflict some *Punishment* on that Man who shall kill another in a *Duel*'. This was the case in Britain as well. Depending on the circumstances, the survivor of a fatal duel was found guilty of murder or manslaughter; but he had to carry an even more severe punishment – the

²⁶⁸ [Anon.], *Some considerations upon the necessity of making a new law to prevent duels* (London, 1720), pp. 1–2.

²⁶⁹ [Anon.], *Some considerations*, p. 1. ²⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 17–18.

'Uneasiness' of mind.²⁷¹ A guilty conscience which anyone who survived a fatal duel had should be a sufficient punishment. A new law against duelling was thus wholly unnecessary.

The MPs were reminded that 'a *single Combat or Duel* has been ever esteemed so far from being unlawful in *it self*, that antiently several Disputes between different Nations have been decided in this manner'.²⁷² Similarly, 'the ancient Law' allowed the use of single combat as a '*Judicial Process*'. The English law was only following the example of the law of nature, according to which 'it was lawful for every Man to defend *by Force* whatever he was in Possession of, or to chastise those who did him an Injury'.²⁷³ The anonymous writer was, moreover, convinced that 'in these sort of *Appeals to Providence* the *Justest Cause* generally meets with *Success*'. It was almost invariably the guilty party or the one who hurled the initial affront that fell in a duel, as attested by the latest example 'of the Death of that unfortunate gentleman, who was lately a Member of your House, and of the Person who was killed *Tuesday last*'.²⁷⁴

The main reason why the author of the letter opposed an anti-duelling law was, however, that such a law was utterly unsuitable for Britain. Those who favoured a new, severe anti-duelling law were 'full of the Praises of *Lewis XIV*'. But the question arose, the anonymous author retorted, 'whether *Our Constitution* will admit of the *same Remedy*'.²⁷⁵ Even a quick perusal of duelling in France easily confirmed that 'Thanks be to God, we neither are nor ever were in the same Condition in *Great Britain*.' First, the number of duels in Britain paled into insignificance when compared with the number of duels in France. Secondly, and much more importantly, '*A Court of Honour*', which was the French remedy for duelling, was wholly inappropriate for Britain. It was, the author asserted, 'inconsistent with *our Constitution*'. Such a court was only suitable under an arbitrary government where the subjects were '*Slaves*'. The French, of course, held 'their *Lives* and *Fortunes*' merely 'at the Discretion of their Prince and his Ministers'. It followed that a system where even their honour entirely depended on a court of law did not make much difference to the French. But for this very same reason it was unthinkable in Britain; a court of honour would jeopardise the free constitution of Britain. 'We are *yet*', the author exclaimed, 'at least a *free Nation*; but should such a new sort of Tribunal be established among us, the Jurisdiction of which, from its very nature, must be left *at large*', things could be radically different.²⁷⁶

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–9, see also pp. 26, 27.

Furthermore, a court of honour would easily become a weapon in the party struggle. It was not possible, the author was convinced, 'to prevent the Judges being influenced by that *Party* which was uppermost at Court'. A court of honour could easily increase the danger of arbitrary government in Britain. According to the anonymous author, 'it might be made a *State-Trap*, and an Instrument in the Power of an enraged Ministry to take away the Liberty or ruin the Fortune of any Gentleman in *Great Britain*'.²⁷⁷ All this was easily demonstrated by the earlier examples of similar courts in England. Star Chamber had been 'a sort of *Court of Honour*' and it had accordingly taken '*particular Care* that Persons of Honour should receive no *Affronts*, nor have the least *Reflection* cast upon their *Reputation*'. But it had always been used in favour of those in power, and those who had been punished by Star Chamber had invariably been 'that Sett of Men who were distinguished at that time by the name of the *Country Party*'. This was also the reason, the author believed, why Star Chamber had been abolished. Similarly, the High Court of Chivalry, 'a *Court-Martial*', had also been used chiefly against those who were '*out of favour at Court*'. The conclusion was inescapable: a court of honour would always become an effective means of arbitrary power.²⁷⁸

Just as for Oldmixon, so for the anonymous author, the British were not only free and courageous; they were equally civil and polite. If duelling was both a cause and a consequence of their freedom and valour; it was hardly less so of their civility and politeness. He argued, with studied moderation: 'I have heard it asserted with an Appearance of some Reason, that most of that *Politeness* and *good Manners* which is at present generally observed in Conversation, is very much owing to that *Awe* and *Respect* which every Gentleman has for another.' The only reason he could think of 'why *Clergymen* and *Women* are frequently observed to assume a greater Liberty of Speech than the rest of the World' was 'that *they wear no Swords*'. The consequences of an anti-duelling law would therefore be fatal. The entire politeness of the British would soon collapse. If the '*Bridle and Restraint*' of duelling would be taken away, 'it is to be feared we must bid farewell to what we now call *Good-breeding*'. Even worse, in the future 'the *greatest Cowards*, and *most worthless Fellows*, will be the most *noisy* and *insolent* on all occasions'. The choice was therefore between freedom, valour, politeness and duelling on the one hand, and arbitrary government, baseness, incivility and a court of honour on the other. The author was convinced that 'the Lives of those few unfortunate

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 9.²⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 10–13.

Men, which are taken away' in duels 'may generally be said to be a sort of *Sacrifice to good Manners*' which was well worth paying. They acted as 'so many *Warnings* to other People not to *transgress* the Bounds of it'.²⁷⁹

The author vehemently denied that he was 'an *Advocate for Duelling*'. Nevertheless, duelling could be 'an *Evil*' but it was a '*necessary One*'.²⁸⁰ The free form of government in Britain demanded it, as did the natural valour of the Britons. And their politeness was equally dependent on it. Duelling, in short, was the only guarantee of British idiosyncrasy and therefore their ultimate superiority.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 14–15.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

Anti-duelling campaigns 1660–1720

ANTI-DUELLENG CAMPAIGNS

Of duelling, the royalist divine Richard Allestree noted in 1667, ‘there are too many, and too noted instances since our restoration’.¹ John Oldmixon, as we have seen, concurred and saw the high frequency of duels after the Restoration as a backlash against Cromwell’s anti-duelling policies.² According to the Scottish divine John Cockburn, the situation had changed dramatically by 1660. Then ‘Swords being put on by all as a Badge of the Recovery of Liberty’ and duels were soon running riot. The reason, Cockburn thought, was not far to seek: ‘For the *Loyalists* and old *Cavaliers* could not forbear reflecting on the Persons and Families tainted with the former Rebellion.’³

As with other social vices, many were convinced that duelling was always seriously on the increase. By the end of 1684 John Evelyn noted in his diary that ‘so many horrid murders and duels were committed about this time as were never before heard of in England; which gave much cause of complaint and murmurings’.⁴ By the early eighteenth century Cockburn thought that the situation was getting out of hand. Everyone was almost daily exposed to injuries and insults. ‘What the next Generation will prove God knows, but the present is most crooked and perverse’, he wrote.⁵ After yet another decade the situation was even worse – at least if we are to believe the critics of duelling. ‘Tis obvious, but melancholy to observe,’ one critic wrote in 1728, ‘that there are more frequent Instances of *Self-Murther* and *Duelling* among Modern Christians, than there are to be found among the Antient Heathens; more in this Protestant Kingdom than in any other Part of Christendom

¹ [Richard Allestree], *The causes of the decay of Christian piety* (London, 1667), p. 229.

² [Oldmixon], *A defence*, p. 4. ³ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 351–2.

⁴ John Evelyn, *The diary of John Evelyn*, ed. Austin Dobson (3 vols., London, 1906), III, p. 135.

⁵ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 248–50.

beside; and more again, within these few Years last past, than ever were known before.⁶

It must be obvious that in assessing the actual number of duels no emphasis could be placed on these descriptions. Rather than describing the development of the frequency of duels, these statements were meant to justify their authors' concern with the social problem of duelling and to persuade the possible reader to believe in the urgent need to sort it out. Yet, the situation was not so desperate for every observer. Of course, the advocates of duelling argued that a few annual duelling casualties were a price well worth paying. Moreover, in comparison to France the number of duels in England seemed to pale into insignificance. Daniel Defoe pointed out in 1704 that 'the *English* are not so much addicted to this Folly as the *French* have been'.⁷ A Frenchman wrote in the 1720s that in England there were 'very few are partisans of duelling, so that you do not often hear of this mode of settling quarrels, but should duels occur, the combatants will always come out of the fight with honour'.⁸

Even a fairly superficial acquaintance with late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century newsletters and memoirs, private letters and diaries confirms that duels were very frequent in England at the time and almost certainly more frequent than before the Civil War and Interregnum. Of course, there had been duels throughout the 1640s and 1650s,⁹ so much so that an ordinance against duelling was published in 1654.¹⁰ But the overall impression is that they became more frequent after 1660.¹¹ The

⁶ [Anon.], *Self-murder and duelling the effects of cowardice and atheism* (London, 1728), p. 3. For a later example see [Edward Clark], *The trial of capt. Edward Clark, commander of his majesty's ship the Canterbury, for the murder of capt. Tho. Innes... in a duel* (London, 1750), p. 4.

⁷ Daniel Defoe, *A review of the affairs of France*, no. 16 (29 April 1704), p. 78.

⁸ Cesar de Saussure, *A foreign view of England in 1725–1729. The letters of Monsieur Cesar de Saussure to his family*, transl. and ed. Madame van Muyden (London, 1995), p. 112.

⁹ See e.g. HMC, *Portland MSS*, II, p. 141; HMC, *De L'Isle and Dudley MSS*, VI, p. 616; Anthony Wood, *The life and times of Anthony Wood*, ed. Andrew Clark (5 vols., Oxford, 1891–1900), I, pp. 83, 91, 422; *The Clarke Papers*, ed. C. H. Firth (London, 1899), III, p. 131; John Nicoll, *A diary of public transactions and other occurrences, chiefly in Scotland, from January 1650 to June 1667* (Edinburgh, 1836), pp. 209–10; John Birch, *Military memoir*, ed. T. W. Webb, Camden Society, new series, 7 (1873), pp. 191–2; *CSPD 1651*, p. 69; *CSPD 1651–2*, pp. 240, 461, 498, 507; *CSPD 1652–3*, pp. 319, 350, 371, 416; *CSPD 1653–4*, pp. 218, 404; *CSPD 1654*, pp. 115, 170, 203, 224; *CSPD 1655–6*, pp. 239, 262; *CSPD 1657–8*, pp. 258, 290–1, 310–11, 551; *CSPD 1658–9*, p. 52; [anon.], *A vindication of my Lord Windsor's late proceedings with Mr. John Griffith, occasioned by his vain aspersions* (n.p., [1650]); John Griffith, *This is a true copy of a letter* (n.p., [1650]). For a challenge to a trial by combat see [anon.], *A chaleng sent from Prince Rupert and the Lord Grandison to Sir William Belford* (London, 1643). I am grateful to Quentin Skinner for this reference. See also Butler 1984, p. 93; Underdown 1960, pp. 30, 103–4, 186; Donagan 2001.

¹⁰ *An ordinance against challenges, duells, and all provocations thereunto. Thursday June 29. 1654* (London, 1654); *CSPD 1654*, pp. 184, 227, 244.

¹¹ Duels were also more frequent in plays after the Restoration, C. L. Barber 1957, pp. 18, 20, 272–5.

popularity of duelling in Charles II's reign was parodied in 1711 in *The Spectator*, according to which, there had been 'the Club of Duellists, in which none was to be admitted that had not fought his Man'. The president of the club had allegedly killed six men in duels and members 'took their Seats according to the Number of their Slain'. 'This Club', *The Spectator* lampooned, 'consists only of Men of Honour, did not continue long, most of the Members of it being put to the Sword, or hanged, a little after its Institution.'¹²

A new development in English duelling habits was that in many cases the seconds fought each other.¹³ Duels were often fought on what even many contemporaries thought as trifling incidents. Their cause was often said to be 'High Words' or 'provoking Language'.¹⁴ Oliver Heywood graphically said of a fatal duel: 'the occasion and beginning of this might be a comedy, but the end is a tragedy'.¹⁵ This does not mean, however, that late Stuart gentlemen were all exceptionally truculent, waiting for nothing more than to issue a challenge. On the contrary, under normal circumstances challenges and duels did not enter into their scheme of existence. It was possible even to withdraw one's challenge without facing utter humiliation.¹⁶

As well as being generally frequent, duels were incessant in the court. A central and insidious reason for the frequency of duelling after the Restoration was, according to Cockburn, 'such Corruption of manners both at Court, and among those who copied after it, as gave continual occasion to Quarrels, which produced as often Duels'.¹⁷ In 1670 a fatal duel was fought over whether Nell Gwynne 'was the handsomer now att Windsor'.¹⁸ Most notorious of all in Charles II's court was its most prominent figure – the duke of Buckingham. He had been challenged in 1661 and almost fought a duel with viscount Fauconberg in 1666. At the same year Buckingham accepted the earl of Ossory's challenge but also revealed it to the House of Lords and Ossory was sent to the Tower. A couple of days later an altercation about the Canary Company's patent

¹² *The Spectator*, no. 9, 1, p. 41.

¹³ HMC, *Rutland MSS*, II, pp. 42, 62, 103; HMC, *Ormond MSS*, new series, VI, p. 236; HMC, *Downshire MSS*, I, pt 1, pp. 122–3; *The Tatler*, no. 39, 1, pp. 284–5; [anon.], *The rash duellist dissected: with the inconveniencies that attend him. By way of essay* (London, 1673), pp. 22–4.

¹⁴ [Anon.], *Boteler's case. Being an impartial narrative of the tryal, & peninent behaviour of, master William Boteler* ([London, 1678]), sigs. B2^v–3^r; [anon.], *A full and true account of the desperate and bloody duel that was fought last night between Capt. Jones, and Mr. Nich. Nugent* (Dublin, 1725).

¹⁵ Oliver Heywood, *Autobiography, diaries, anecdote and eventbooks*, ed. J. Horsfall Turner (4 vols., London, 1881–5), III, pp. 209–11; HMC, *12th Rutland MSS*, II, p. 118.

¹⁶ See e.g. HMC, *Ormond MSS*, new series, VI, p. 229; Ketton-Cremer 1944, pp. 58–68.

¹⁷ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 351–2. ¹⁸ HMC, *Rutland MSS*, II, p. 17.

occurred between Buckingham and the marquis of Dorchester, who was equally inclined to duelling.¹⁹ Buckingham alleged that Dorchester 'gave him the Lie'. The House of Lords sent them both to the Tower. In March 1669 Buckingham was again involved in a quarrel but the earl of Arlington could prevent the planned duel.²⁰ By far the most notorious duel of the whole reign was, however, the one between Buckingham and the earl of Shrewsbury in January 1668, which was occasioned by Shrewsbury becoming privy to his wife's and Buckingham's liaison. Both principals had two seconds and all four men were engaged in the fight. One of the seconds died on the spot; Shrewsbury was wounded and died two months later.²¹

Buckingham's case, together with other similar cases such as that of the earl of Rochester,²² could prompt one to make haste and to conclude that the frequency of duelling in Restoration England could be accounted for by the rise of rake culture. Of course, many an opponent of duelling laid the blame at the rakes' door.²³ But we should resist such a glib conclusion. There is no denying that many who can be labelled as rakes had a propensity to fight duels, but so did many other gentlemen. Duelling was not a distinctive character, let alone a definitive element, of rakish behaviour, and it certainly 'lacked the element of deliberate outrage', as Anna Bryson has noted. This was achieved by gratuitous and indisputably criminal violence. Fighting Shrewsbury, Buckingham did not intend to spark off outrage, and if outrage was felt, it was caused by the actual circumstances of the duel rather than by duelling itself.²⁴ Thomas Shadwell's play *The libertine* was replete with violence, but there was not a single duel in it.²⁵

The challenges and duels could have intensified the wrath many Anglican Royalists felt for Buckingham. Yet, he attracted widespread popularity at the same time, and was perceived as a defender of religion

¹⁹ See Henry Pierrepont, marquis of Dorchester, *The Lord Marquesse Dorchesters letter*, especially pp. 2–3.

²⁰ Samuel Pepys, *The diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (11 vols., London, 1970–83), II, pp. 32–3, IX, p. 462; *Journal of the House of Lords*, XII, 18–20, 52–5; Chapman 1949, p. 131; HMC, *12th report, appendix, part VII*, p. 62; Pincus 1996, p. 371.

²¹ Hamilton 1829, pp. 173–6; *CSPD 1667–8*, pp. 192, 193, 205, 400; Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS D.8, pp. 67–70; DNB; Pepys, *The diary*, IX, pp. 26–7.

²² For the earl of Rochester see *The letters of John Wilmot, earl of Rochester*, ed. Jeremy Treglown (Oxford, 1980), pp. 5, 20, 55.

²³ [Anon.], *Self-murder*, p. 58; [anon.], *The humour of duelling, considered, its pretenses examined into, and exploded* (London, 1720), p. 8; Cockburn, *the history*, p. 248.

²⁴ Anna Bryson 1998, p. 248; Statt 1995.

²⁵ Thomas Shadwell, *The libertine: a tragedy* (London, 1692); see also Edward Ward, *The rambling rakes: or, London libertines* (London, 1700).

and political freedom and thus an enemy not only of the French style of government but everything it represented.²⁶ Perhaps his penchant for duelling could be seen as part of his anti-French posture.

Irrespective of whether there were more duels after the Restoration and whether or not their numbers were increasing, the opponents of duelling thought it was an exceptionally serious problem. 'Every petty *affront*, and inconsiderable Reproach', declared Henry Glover in his assizes sermon in Dorchester in 1664, 'is no lesse then *Death*, by the *Duellers Law*.'²⁷ Although human and divine laws allowed killing in self-defence, 'shall I,' another critic asked, 'destroy my Brother for a Blow, or an Affront only?'²⁸

Nonetheless, the actual number of duels was relatively unimportant. What was much more significant was the widespread public interest in the news about duels. Even a combat between two completely obscure gentlemen was thought to be worth reporting in both newsletters and private correspondence. This suggests that, whilst duels were far from daily incidents, they attracted rapt attention. If a better-known gentleman or nobleman was involved, the story was all the more titillating. The countess of Northampton wrote to her sister, the countess of Rutland, in 1682: 'I sopose you have had an account of the quarells and duells has been lately fought.'²⁹ A few years later Roger Herbert noted in his letter to the countess of Rutland that 'if your Ladyship have not heard the story [of a duel] it will not be improper for me to relate it'.³⁰ In 1703 a letterwriter narrated a duel, pointing out that it was 'the surprising news in this country'.³¹ Only the most sensational news could compete with those of duelling. In March 1720 it was asserted that 'nobody talks of anything but stocks and South Sea, and now and then a duel'.³²

The opponents of duelling, like their predecessors in the early seventeenth century, were keen to point out that it was not so much the high frequency of duels but rather the wide publicity of those which actually took place which mattered. This public infatuation with duels thus helped account for their prevalence. News about duelling could be shocking at first but people, the critics insisted, grew accustomed to them very quickly. As Anthony Hamilton noted in reference to the circumstances

²⁶ Pincus 1996, pp. 371, 373, 374-5, 428-9, 436-7.

²⁷ Henry Glover, *Ekdikesis or a discourse of vengeance. Delivered in a sermon preached at Dorchester, at the assizes holder there for the country of Dorset*, 4. III 1663 (London, 1664), pp. 14-15.

²⁸ William Freke, *Select essays tending to the universal reformation of learning* (London, 1693), p. 79; John Hartcliffe, *A treatise of moral and intellectual virtues* (London, 1691), pp. 63-4.

²⁹ HMC, Rutland MSS, II, p. 75. ³⁰ Ibid., II, p. 118.

³¹ HMC, Portland MSS, IV, p. 59. ³² Ibid., V, p. 593.

of the duel between Buckingham and Shrewsbury and the countess of Shrewsbury's role in it, 'the Publick grows familiar with, and bears every thing at long-run, and Decency and Virtue it self are render'd tame and tractable by *Time*'.³³ Once a duel took place, John Cockburn argued, the news about it 'immediately spread over the Kingdom, and become the Discourse of every Coffee-house, both at home an abroad'.³⁴ It followed that to curtail the number of duels was clearly not enough; they had to be eradicated altogether.

If we telescope taking the criticism of duelling between 1660 and *c.* 1720 as a whole, we can see that, by and large, it centred around three particular periods. The first period occurred in the 1660s. Charles II had published an anti-duelling proclamation from Brussels in 1658 and in August 1660 he issued *A proclamation against fighting of duels*, where he declared that 'it is become too frequent, especially with Persons of quality, under a vain pretence of Honour, to take upon them to be the Revengers of their private quarrels, by Duel and single Combate'.³⁵ Three years later a bill against duelling was introduced in the Lords, but after its second reading it was dropped.³⁶ Often such anti-duelling measures were prompted by a particular duel. Thus when viscount Fauconberg and Sir Thomas Osborne fought a duel in October 1666 it inspired the House of Commons to vote 'that a bill should be brought in to prevent duels and of the punishments also to be inflicted upon duellers'. But the Commons also acknowledged the injurious nature of certain 'deeds or words' which tended to dishonour and they thought that 'reparation' should be provided for those thus dishonoured.³⁷ Within a fortnight the appointed committee had finished its work and Sir Edward Thurlow brought in 'a severe bill . . . against duels'. According to the bill, the sender of a challenge 'shall be imprisoned during life, and shall forfeit all his goods and personal estate, one half to the King and the other half to him that shall sue for it'. He would also lose half of his 'freehold lands for ever to the King'. The bill would also have extended overseas and have made an attempt to prohibit the king from granting pardons.³⁸ Obviously even many MPs found this far too severe. Its second reading was deferred

³³ [Anthony Hamilton], *Memoirs of the life of count de Grammont*, transl. Abel Boyer (London, 1714), p. 329.

³⁴ Cockburn, *The history*, p. 205.

³⁵ Charles II, *A proclamation against fighting of duels*, 12 August 1660. Cf. William Prynne, *Mr. Prynne's letter and proposals, to our gracious lord and sovereign King Charles* (London, 1660), pp. 4–5.

³⁶ *Journals of the House of Lords*, xi, pp. 546, 548–9, 561.

³⁷ *The diary of John Milward*, ed. Caroline Robbins (Cambridge, 1938), pp. 17, 18; *CSPD 1666–7*, p. 209; John Kelyng, *A report of divers cases in plan of the crown* (London, 1708).

³⁸ Milward, *The diary*, p. 30.

'because there was some clauses in it which might be of ill consequence, as that all estates, real and personal, should be forfeited to the King, which would be the undoing of whole families'.³⁹ After the second reading the bill was buried in a committee.⁴⁰ A similar bill was reintroduced in 1667 and again it was 'spoken against in regard of forfeiting estates and some other inconveniences'.⁴¹

The aftermath of the duel between the duke of Buckingham and the earl of Shrewsbury produced a fresh wave of anti-duelling campaigning. Charles II's decision to pardon the duellists attracted criticism from various quarters. According to Anthony Hamilton, 'the Queen was at the Head of those who exclaim'd both so publick and so scandalous a Commerce, and against the Impunity of such licentious Lewdnesse'.⁴² Harsh criticism was also expected from parliament.⁴³ In March William Prynne, who had been involved in earlier measures against duelling, expressed his indignation about duelling and fully supported the view that the duellists 'should forfeit their whole estate for the public service'. Sir Thomas Littleton endeavoured to excuse the duel, arguing that 'since it received a pardon under the Great Seal he hoped the House would not vacate the King's pardon'. But this obviously made the matters even worse; many MPs were deeply offended by this attempt 'to excuse a vicious and notorious murder'.⁴⁴

At the same time Charles II salved his conscience by appointing a committee 'to consider the ways of preventing the frequent mischief of duelling'.⁴⁵ In April 1668 the king gave a declaration that 'His fixed Resolution is, That upon no Pretence whatsoever any Pardon shall be hereafter granted, for killing any Man in Duel or Renconter; but that the strict Course of Law shall take Place in all such Cases'. A few days later the duke of York presented an anti-duelling bill in the House of Lords. The bill was as severe as the one in the House of Commons in 1666, decreeing that 'all persons who shall fight any duell whereupon death of any of the parties shall not ensue . . . shall forfeite all their estate reall and personall'. If, on the other hand, the duel ended in death 'the same shall be taken to be murder both in the Principalls soe fighting and in their Seconds or Abettors, and shall suffer death for the same'. But the bill also carefully provided satisfaction for a gentleman's injured honour. As an index of its importance, it was committed, after its second reading, to

³⁹ Ibid., p. 40. ⁴⁰ *Journals of the House of Commons*, viii, pp. 633, 640, 652.

⁴¹ Milward, *The diary*, pp. 85, 90; *Journals of the House of Commons*, ix, pp. 1, 5.

⁴² [Hamilton], *Memoirs*, p. 329.

⁴³ Pepys, *The diary* (6 February 1668), ix, p. 53.

⁴⁴ Milward, *The diary*, pp. 230-1.

⁴⁵ HMC, *Le Fleming MSS*, p. 55; Pepys, *The diary*, ix, pp. 26-7.

a committee of the whole House, after which it went to, and was buried in, a select committee.⁴⁶

Although this first period of duelling criticism was dominated by these legal efforts to curb the practice, a few important diatribes, especially from divines' pens, against the intellectual and ideological status of duelling were published. Thus, vilification of duelling formed a central theme in Clement Ellis's characterisation of 'England's brave gentleman' in *The gentle sinner* (1660). Richard Allestree condemned duelling in *The gentlemen calling* first published in 1660 and reprinted 1662. A few years later he repeated his criticism in *The causes of the decay of Christian piety* (1667). To this same period belongs Hobbes's anti-duelling arguments. Although he gave a dispassionate account of civility and duelling's role in it, he also censured duelling in the *Leviathan* (1651) and enlarged his criticism in its Latin edition (1668) as well as in the *Behemoth* (composed 1670, published 1679).

The second and much longer period when duelling was roundly criticised occurred towards the end of the century. A challenge occasioned the House of Commons to discuss duelling in October 1675 and to set up a committee to prepare an anti-duelling bill.⁴⁷ But a wider anti-duelling criticism was unleashed by Charles II's new proclamation against duelling in March 1680.⁴⁸ For many, Charles II's tendency to issue proclamations against duelling but also to grant pardons to notorious duellists appeared hypocritical. Hobbes had already argued in the *Leviathan* that there was something very contradictory in the facts that, on the one hand, 'the Law condemneth Duells; the punishment is made capitall, yet, on the other, he that refuseth Duell, is subject to contempt and scorne, without remedy; and sometimes by the Soveraign himselfe thought unworthy to have any charge, or preferment in Warre'.⁴⁹

At the same time as the king issued his latest proclamation in 1680 an anonymous treatise reflected on 'absurd and incongruous *contradictions* in his [i.e. king's] *actions*'. For the king was both 'the Fountain of Honour and the Lawgiver'. It followed that whilst he could make a law against duelling, yet at the same time he was bound to the honour group of nobles and gentlemen. As the author put it, the king conferred honour on a person, 'and then immediately make such Laws, which if he obeys

⁴⁶ Huntington Library (hereafter HL), Ellesmere MS no. 405, fo 2^r; HMC, 8th report, appendix, I, p. 122; *Journals of the House of Lords*, XII, pp. 215–16, 218, 220, 226, 228, 232.

⁴⁷ *Journals of the House of Commons*, IX, p. 363; *Debates of the House of Commons*, III, pp. 337–41.

⁴⁸ Charles II, *A proclamation against duels* (London, 1680). ⁴⁹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 211.

'tis [im]possible for him to preserve' it. A possible solution was to find an alternative to fighting. But the simplest solution would be just to execute severely the laws against duellists.⁵⁰ After sixty years of vigorous anti-duelling campaigning in 1720 the main blame for its utter failure was squarely laid at the royal door. Of course, Charles II had issued proclamations against duelling, but neither he nor his successors 'had kept up the Dignity of a Royal Word'. They had not, in other words, put into execution these severe proclamations, but had freely pardoned duellists. Had Charles II and his successors on the throne lived up to their words 'the Point of Honour now pleaded would be laughed at, and the most would put up any Affront, and bear patiently the Name of Coward'.⁵¹

In 1685 a treatise entitled *The laws of honor* (1685) offered an account of the suppression of duels in France, thereby suggesting ways in which the English could follow suit.⁵² Early in 1686 John Evelyn recorded that 'many bloody and notorious duels were fought about this time', and expressed a hope 'that his Majesty will at last severely remedy this unchristian custom'.⁵³ In both 1692 and 1699 there was an attempt in the Commons to introduce 'a Bill against Duelling'.⁵⁴ Had George Mackenzie ('Bloody Mackenzie') been right, the bills could have passed. According to him, 'the same men, who brag of this [i.e. the point of honour] when enrag'd, and in the field, condemn it in Parliament and in cold blood'.⁵⁵ But alas, this was not the case and the bills failed to pass.

At the same time as MPs discussed these bills, moralists were again busy producing their own tirades against duelling. In 1680 an anonymous work entitled, *Honours preservation without blood: or, a sober advice to duellists* was printed. Its aim was to offer advice 'of the most exquisite nature to appease the sudden fits of fury, which English-spirits have of late been too much subject to'. It promised to blaze a way between a duel and a 'loss of reputation', as the title-page advised the potential reader. In *A discourse of duels* (1687), 'an Excellent Discourse' as it was described in 1720,⁵⁶ Thomas Comber, a future chaplain in ordinary to William and Mary, also tried to discredit the theory of duelling. The non-juror Jeremy Collier vilified duelling both in his *Miscellanies: in five essays* (1694) as well as in *Essays upon several moral subjects* (1697). George Mackenzie also argued

⁵⁰ [Anon.], *Honours preservation*, pp. 19–20. ⁵¹ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. xv–xvi.

⁵² [Anon.], *The laws of honor: or, an account of the suppression of duels in France* (London, 1685), sig. A4^v.

⁵³ Evelyn, *The diary*, III, p. 199.

⁵⁴ *Journals of the House of Commons*, x, p. 662; XIII, p. 8.

⁵⁵ George Mackenzie, *Reason. An essay* (London, 1690), p. 49; Jeremy Collier, *Essays upon several moral subjects*, 2nd edn (London, 1697), p. 114.

⁵⁶ Finet, *A letter from Paris*, sigs. [a1^r–3^v].

against duelling in his numerous publications during this period and so did the Jesuit William Darrell in *A gentleman instructed* first published in 1704, while Daniel Defoe condemned duelling several times in his *A Review of the Affairs of France* in 1704.

Towards the turn of the century several extensive moral treatises translated from French also condemned duelling. The Jansenist Pierre Nicole's *Moral essays* (originally published in 1675 and translated into English between 1676 and 1684) severely criticised duelling. Another Jansenist Jacques Esprit's *The falshood of human virtue* (1691) and *Discourses on the deceitfulness of human virtues* (1706) expressed similar criticism, as did the Swiss Protestant Jacques Abbadie's *The art of knowing one-self* (1695) and La Bruyère's *The characters* (1699). The 1703 edition of Antoine de Courtin's *The rules of civility* included a small part of his larger anti-duelling treatise *Suite de la civilité Française, ou traité du point-d'honneur*.

Nevertheless, by far the most intensive campaign against duelling of this whole period occurred during the second decade of the eighteenth century. Once again, in 1711 the House of Commons prepared an anti-duelling bill.⁵⁷ At the same time John Selden's *The duello* was reprinted. One anti-duelling campaigner was 'entirely disappointed' when he got Selden's '*Little Tract*'.⁵⁸ But the campaign in its entirety was launched after the most famous duel in British history. In November 1712 the duke of Hamilton and Lord Mohun fought a duel in Hyde Park, where both were killed. This sensational incident stirred up an acrimonious dispute about the exact circumstances of the duel. Several accounts of the duel and its background and circumstances were very soon circulating.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ This bill was prompted by a duel between Sir Cholmley Deering and Richard Thornhill, *The history and proceedings of the House of Commons from the Restoration to the present time*, ed. [Caesar Ward and Richard Chandler] (14 vols., London, 1742–4), iv, pp. 213, 338. For the duel itself see Richard Thornhill, *The case of Col. Richard Thornhill, showing the true occasion of his fighting Sir Cholmley Deering Bar.* (London, 1711); [anon.], *The life and noble character of Richard Thornhill, esq.* (London, 1711), which also contains a pro-duelling poem, allegedly written by 'a Parliament-man', p. 8.

⁵⁸ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 349–51.

⁵⁹ *The Evening Post* no. 510, 15 November 1712; no. 511, 18 November 1712; *The British Mercury*, no. 385, 19 November 1712. A fortnight after the duel *The London Gazette* (no. 5073, 29 November 1712) was advertising the publication 'in a few Days' of 'The Authentick Depositions . . . relating to the Death of his Grace, the Duke of Hamilton' and claimed that the already published depositions were 'False and Spurious'. A letter from a gentleman in London to his friend at Edinburgh, 18.XI 1712 (Edinburgh, 1712) gave a favourable view of Hamilton, emphasising how he had spoken 'with an Air of Civility'. See also [anon.], *An excellent ballad of the Lord Mohun and Duke Hamilton. With an exact account of their melancholy deaths* (London, n.d.); [anon.], *Duke Hamilton and Lord Mohun* (n.p., n.d.); [anon.], *The case at large of Duke Hamilton and the Lord Mohun* (3rd edn, London, 1712); [anon.], *The Lord Mohun's vindication* (London, [1712?]); [anon.], *A true and impartial account of the murder of his grace the duke of Hamilton and Brandon, by Mr. Mackartney* (London, 1712); [anon.], *Memoirs of the life and family of the most illustrious James late duke of Hamilton* (London, 1717). Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's history of his own time* (2 vols., London, 1734) II, p. 612. For the duel and its background see now the excellent study by Stater (1999).

The conduct of the principals and especially the part Mohun's second, General Maccartney, played in the events were hotly debated.

The Hamilton–Mohun duel also triggered a mostly negative debate against duelling itself. Of course, Abel Boyer and John Oldmixon defended duelling, but most of those who aired their opinions in 1712 about duelling argued against the whole institution. After giving a description of the duel, *A full and true account* went on to wish 'that the Laws were put strictly in Execution against Duelling'.⁶⁰ Another similar pamphlet expressed confidence that the Hamilton–Mohun duel would have a positive effect on those MPs who had rejected the anti-duelling bill in 1711. They, it stated, 'will change their Opinion upon this Accident, and be as hearty for it'.⁶¹

When the queen opened a new parliamentary session in April 1713 she told the MPs that 'the impious Practice of Dueling requires some speedy and effectual Remedy'. *The Examiner* was convinced that this would both 'tie up the Hands of a Blood-thirsty Faction' as well as prevent 'our Civil Discontent from rising to an open Rupture'.⁶² In both houses, anti-duelling bills were duly drafted, but nothing came of them.⁶³ At the same time Joseph Addison and Richard Steele launched their own campaign against duelling, first in *The Tatler* and then in *The Spectator*.

This campaign which began in 1711 can be said to have culminated in 1720. A fresh attempt to pass a bill against duelling was once more made, occasioned again partly by a recent duel.⁶⁴ This time the bill passed the Commons but the Lords rejected it at its first reading.⁶⁵ The bill was lent support by several published tracts and treatises.⁶⁶ John Finet's letter from Paris to the earl of Northampton in 1610 giving an account of the French anti-duelling measures was now printed. Perhaps the most detailed and certainly the longest of all treatises on duelling,

⁶⁰ [Anon.], *A full and true account of a desperate and bloody duel: which was fought this morning in High-Park between my Lord Moon, and Duke Hamilton* (London, [1712]), p. 4.

⁶¹ [Anon.], *A full and exact relation of the duel fought in Hyde-Park, on Saturday, November 15. 1712. Between His Grace James, Duke of Hamilton, and the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Mohun. In a letter to a member of parliament* (London, 1713), p. 15. See also [anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes in Old Nicks lottery, for men of honour only; where every man that ventures, is sure to get the Lord knows what for ever* (London, 1712), pp. 1–11.

⁶² *The Examiner* no. 41, 10–13. April 1713; *The parliamentary history of England* (London, 1810), vi, p. 1173.

⁶³ *Journals of the House of Lords*, xix, pp. 511–12; *Journals of the House of Commons*, xvii, pp. 281, 355, 385, 402, 406, 407, 418, 421, 422, 434, 441; Hoppitt 1997, p. 279.

⁶⁴ [Anon.], *The humour of duelling*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Journals of the House of Commons*, xix, pp. 296, 313, 323, 326, 331, 339, 352; *Journals of the House of Lords*, xxi, pp. 314, 320.

⁶⁶ [Anon.], *The humour of duelling*, pp. 5–6; [anon.], *The court of honour: or, the laws, rules, and ordinances, establish'd for the suppression of duels in France* (London, 1720), the title-page announced: 'Publish'd on the occasion of the bill now depending in parliament relating to duels.'

the Scottish divine, John Cockburn's *The history and examination of duels* (written in c. 1716) also appeared in 1720 to lend weight to the parliamentary campaign. Cockburn, whose work can be seen as a response to *The Tatler's* suggestions that 'a good History of Quarrels would be very edifying to the Publick', strongly exhorted that 'those who have publick Authority and Power' must act as quickly as possible.⁶⁷ There was not going to be another anti-duelling bill until 1819, but anti-duelling criticism continued and there was no lack of suggestions for anti-duelling legislation.⁶⁸

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ANTI-DUELING ARGUMENTS

As in the early seventeenth century, so in its later part many of the most formidable and detailed criticisms of duelling were presented by divines. Thus Clemence Ellis and Richard Allestree, Thomas Comber and Jeremy Collier, John Cockburn and several others were divines. But since they were divines, it is hardly any news that many of their arguments were caught in distinctively religious terms. The frankness with which the advocates of duelling acknowledged that the principles they were preaching were irreligious was shocking to many of their opponents. Richard Allestree noted in 1660 that 'to a Christian, 'tis certain the irreligion of Fighting a Duel would be the most infamous thing, and even to a sober Heathen the folly of it would be so too'.⁶⁹ The same idea of the sharp incongruity between the principles of duelling and Christianity was widely repeated in the early eighteenth century. Even *The Tatler* mentioned 'that Unchristian like and Bloody Custom of Duelling'.⁷⁰ When Anthony Holbrook preached against duelling at St Paul's in November 1726, his whole sermon was based on the obvious premise that duelling was manifestly against God's word.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. xiv, 353–4. See *The Tatler*, no. 25, 1, p. 194.

⁶⁸ See e.g. [anon.], *Occasional poems, very seasonable and proper for the present times, on the six following subjects* (London, 1726), p. 25; [anon.], *The countess's speech to her son Roderigo, upon her first seeing him, after he was wounded in his late duel*, 3rd edn (London, [1733]), p. 3.

⁶⁹ Richard Allestree, *The gentlemen calling* (London, 1660), p. 146.

⁷⁰ *The Tatler*, no. 38, 1, p. 271; [anon.], *The humour of duelling*, p. 3.

⁷¹ Anthony Holbrook, *Christian essays upon the immorality of uncleanness and duelling, deliver'd in two sermons preach'd at St. Pauls* (London, 1727), pp. 41–3. See also [William Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, p. 40; Isaac Watts, *A defense against the temptation to self-murder* (London, 1726), pp. 129–30; William Wood, *The dueling orator, delineated. In a letter to a friend, by way of appeal to truth* (London, 1726), p. 26; Joseph Sewall, *He that would keep God's commandments must renounce the society of evil doers. A sermon preach'd at the publick lecture in Boston, July 18th 1728 after a bloody and mortal duel* (Boston in New England, 1728); [Clark], *The trial*, pp. 4–5; [anon.], *A letter to the gentlemen of the army* (London, 1757), p. 5.

In the late sixteenth century and still in the earlier part of the seventeenth century duelling was often associated by its critics with trial by combat and its practitioners could thus be accused of tempting God. This line of argument had been almost completely abandoned by the latter part of the seventeenth century.⁷² Instead the critics juxtaposed duelling as a means of exacting private revenge with the basic principles of Christianity. On the one hand, many critics referred to Rom. 12.19. This was the text on which Henry Glover delivered his sermon on vengeance in 1664. According to him, vengeance was God's prerogative, magistrates' duty and people's sin. This rule he applied as much to rebellion as to duelling – 'a sin every way as *ugly* in the sight of God, as it appears full of *Bravery* in the eyes of some vain men'.⁷³ The same biblical passage appeared in one of the accounts of the Hamilton–Mohun duel,⁷⁴ and it was this same text on which the royal chaplain Edmund Chishull based his sermon delivered in the Windsor Castle chapel in 23 November 1712, a week after the Hamilton–Mohun duel.⁷⁵

Moreover, it was also emphasised that the whole notion of revenge was alien to Christianity. Christ had been meek and kind, God merciful and forgiving. According to Richard Allestree, he who fought a duel despised 'the Christian precepts of Meekness[,] long suffering, and Forgiveness'.⁷⁶ Isaac Watts told his readers that 'the Law of *Christ* requires Meekness and Patience', another author defined duelling succinctly as 'an acting diametrically opposite to the Divine Goodness'.⁷⁷ It followed that private revenge – much more duelling, its most heinous form – was directly against the basic principles of Christianity. Allestree thought that there was a glaring contradiction between the requirements of the duelling theory to avenge every petty insult and the basic teachings of the Bible to repress one's anger. Exactly the same principle was again maintained by Chishull in his sermon after the Hamilton–Mohun duel.⁷⁸ Whereas Christianity promoted 'an heroick Patience', the world, Pierre Bayle wrote, took 'a Man of Courage' to be 'extremely nice in the Point of Honour, who can't bear the least Affront, who revenges, swift as Lightning, and at the hazard of his Life, the least disrespect'.⁷⁹

⁷² For an exception see T[homas] C[omber], *A discourse of duels* (London, 1687), pp. 3–10.

⁷³ Glover, *Ekdikesis*, pp. 5, 6, 13, 14. ⁷⁴ [Anon.], *A full and true account*, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Edmund Chishull, *Against duelling. A sermon preached before the queen in the Royal Chapel at Windsor-Castle, on November the 23rd, 1712*, 2nd edn (London, 1712).

⁷⁶ Allestree, *The gentlemen calling*, p. 140; Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 215–19.

⁷⁷ Watts, *A defense*, p. 134; [anon.], *Self-murder*, p. 58; Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 253–7; Holbrook, *Christian essays*, pp. 42–3; C[omber], *A discourse*, pp. 1–2.

⁷⁸ Allestree, *The gentlemen calling*, pp. 140–1; Chishull, *Against duelling*, pp. 11–12.

⁷⁹ Bayle, *Miscellaneous reflections*, 1, pp. 283–4. [Anon.], *A discourse of courage* (n.p., 1690), p. 1.

If men failed to curb their passion and thus wanted to avenge insults by a duel, they were clearly committing an unpardonable sin. For Comber it was obvious that as soon as a man was engaged in a duel he was committing ‘a great and grievous Sin against God’,⁸⁰ and Francis Osborne had reckoned that ‘formall *Duells* are but a late invention of the Devill’s’.⁸¹ Duellists were thus acting against God’s manifest will. But as well as arguing that the duel was a flagrant breach of the principles of Christianity and thus an unforgivable sin, many critics of duelling also claimed that the duellists’ view of honour had gone seriously awry. Blaise Pascal posed the rhetorical question, ‘have you ever seen any thing that seems to be more contrary’ than the ‘punctilio of *Honour*’ and the precepts of Christianity.⁸² Henry Glover preached that ‘if they are Christians as well as *Gentlemen*, the *Christian Conscience* would do well to be looked after, as well as the *Gentlemans Credit*’.⁸³ Honour, the critics insisted, was not something conferred by your equals; true honour only came from God.

Given this fairly pungent religious opposition to duelling, it is not exceptionally surprising that some of the critics thought that the ultimate solution to the problem of duelling would be found in a rigid enforcement of these principles in everyday life. This was exactly what Allestree argued in 1660. He declared that ‘there is sure an antidote against this *malady* . . . and that is by making their lives so uniformly Christian, that it may be evident, ‘tis Conscience, not fear that works with them’.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, suggestions that the strict adherence to Christian rules and precepts could provide the ultimate solution to duelling became markedly less frequent. Of course, religious arguments against duelling were expounded throughout the period and even beyond, but there seems to have been a growing awareness that duelling was far too insidious to be abolished by meticulous applications of Christian maxims to everyday life. In fact, it seems obvious that Christianity did not play a very prominent role in the anti-duelling discourse in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century. Certainly, the problem of duelling did not impinge on the anti-vice campaign of the Societies for Reformation of

⁸⁰ C[omber], *A discourse*, p. 11; Holbrook, *Christian essays*, pp. 30, 33.

⁸¹ [Francis Osborne], *Advice to a son; or directions for your better conduct through the various and most important encounters of this life* (Oxford, 1656), p. 29. See also Benjamin Colman, *Death and the grave without any order. A sermon preached July 7, 1728. Being the Lord’s-Day after a tragical duel* (Boston, 1728), pp. 14–16; Sewall, *He that would keep*, p. 6; Allestree, *Gentlemans calling*, pp. 141–3; Chishull, *Against duelling*, p. 14.

⁸² Blaise Pascal, *Les provinciales, or, the mystery of Jesuitisme*, transl. [anon.], 2nd edn (London, 1658), p. 84.

⁸³ Glover, *Ekdikesis*, p. 15. ⁸⁴ Allestree, *The gentlemans calling*, p. 151.

Manners in the 1690s and 1700s. It is indicative that during the most sustained parliamentary campaign against duelling one critic remarked that the divines remained curiously silent about the whole issue. 'But I must first Stop a little', he maintained, 'and express my wonder, that our Divines should think fit to sit still, Silent and unconcerned, and see, this Plague, this Itch of Duelling grow rife, and spread and Scatter its poison over all the Kingdom.'⁸⁵ This was tacitly to acknowledge the point made by several advocates of duelling that a gentleman should put his reputation and standing amongst his peers before the principles of Christianity.

Most importantly, even some of the divines thundering against duelling used curiously few religious arguments and little religious parlance in their critique, let alone suggested that the final solution to the menacing problem would be found from the teachings of Christ. Thus neither Clement Ellis in *The gentile sinner* nor Jeremy Collier in his essays against duelling availed themselves of the Christian doctrine. Instead, their overall accounts of duelling and their suggested solutions were almost entirely secular in character.

Perhaps the most obvious secular line of argument against duelling was the traditional idea that duelling was inherently in opposition to and in fact openly undermining the authority of the king and the law. As Thomas Comber remarked in 1687, 'the engaging in a Duel is an unsufferable Affront to the King, and the Laws, it injures the Government under which we live, and the Society whereof we are Members'. Jeremy Taylor wholeheartedly agreed, noting that duelling was directly 'against all Laws of God and Man'.⁸⁶ It was thus often argued that duelling was, despite constant suggestions for anti-duelling legislation, already against the actual commandments of the king and the existing laws. Hobbes claimed, as we have seen, that 'the Law condemneth Duells; the punishment is made capitall'.⁸⁷ William Darrell argued that, as well as being 'condemned by the Law of God', the duellists 'stand guilty of Murder by the Laws of the Land, and therefore are mark't with Shame and Infamy by the Government'.⁸⁸ John Disney gave a detailed account of various forms of law in order to demonstrate that duelling was forbidden by all of them.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ [Anon.], *The humour of duelling*, p. 5; [Webster], *A casuistical essay*, p. 77.

⁸⁶ C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, p. 18; Jeremy Taylor, *Doctor dubitativus, or the rule of conscience. The second volume* (London, 1660), p. 113.

⁸⁷ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 211. ⁸⁸ [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, p. 40.

⁸⁹ [Anon.], *Self-murder*, p. 62; John Disney, *A second essay upon the execution of the laws against immorality and profaneness* (London, 1710), pp. 317–24; Mackenzie, *Reason*, pp. 47–8.

There was one significant new political factor in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English politics which lent credence to this political argument. The critics of duelling were convinced that duelling had received new impetus from ever-growing competition and open strife between the Whigs and the Tories. This was especially conspicuous in the aftermath of the Hamilton–Mohun duel. Both parties accused the other of fomenting the duel.⁹⁰ While giving a partisan view of the duel Defoe also lamented that the party conflict gave rise to duels. A fortnight after the duel he regarded it as the liveliest representation of ‘the present Feuds and Outragious Party-Quarrelling’ and pointed out that ‘I abhor the embarking such a Quarrel as this, with our Parties: Murderers (for such Duellers are) ought to be accepted or own’d by no Party’.⁹¹ Later when he published his enquiry into the duel Defoe gave a Whig account of the events, noting that those who claimed that the whole duel had been occasioned by General Maccartney aimed to make it ‘a Whig-Plot, to murder the Duke; How ridiculous that supposition is; How little worth the Whigs while’ was readily obvious for everyone. At the same time he argued that the duel had nothing to do with ‘a Party-quarrel’. All such claims were nothing but empty rhetoric.⁹²

A few years later Cockburn could view the case more impassionately. According to him, there were two ways in which party politics increased duelling. First, ‘the rough and narrow Spirit of Party and Faction’ easily led to ‘rude Insults, unmannerly Affronts, the devising and spreading defamatory Lies and false Accusations’, which then gave rise to duels. But party politics increased duelling in a more insidious way as well. Many duellists had pointed out that complaints of insults made to the government ‘would avail little, unless one be of the prevailing Party’. This was particularly true if the insult had been occasioned by ‘publick Matters’ as was often the case. Duelling could not be replaced by public hearings as long as the political nation was so sharply divided.⁹³ The party conflict continued to be seen as a hotbed of duelling and the Hamilton–Mohun duel continued to be cited as an instance of this.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Stater 1999, pp. 238–81; [anon.], *Whig and Tory, or the scribbling duellists* (London, 1681); [anon.], *The duel a poem* (London [Dublin], 1731), pp. 4–5.

⁹¹ Defoe, *Review*, no. 34 (29 November 1712), ix, pp. 67–8; see also no. 35 (6 December 1712), ix, pp. 69–71.

⁹² [Daniel Defoe], *A strict enquiry into the circumstances of a late duel* (London, 1713), pp. 11–12, 4, 40, 15.

⁹³ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 249, 317–18, 320–1.

⁹⁴ [Anon.], *The duel*, pp. 4–5; [anon.], *The countess’s speech*, p. 3.

But anti-duelling campaigning would not have been worth all the strenuous effort were it not for the fact that the problem was much more guileful than an ordinary infringement of the law. What made duelling particularly iniquitous was that it was undermining the entire social and political structure of the English polity. Duels, a future chaplain in ordinary to William and Mary, Thomas Comber, declared, 'strike at the very Root of Government and Laws, and take away all that Safety and Peace which Men expect from those Magistrates whom they obey'. Duelling was tearing the very ligaments of the society. Private men were erecting, as it were, a magistracy of their own, 'to *Judge* and *Execute* in Matters of Life and Death'. The public authority of the king and the law was thus wholly set aside, and it followed, as the non-juror Jeremy Collier pointed out, that 'when the *Fences* are thus broken down, Peace and Property Good-night!' Just like during the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, it was claimed that duelling was a highway to anarchy.⁹⁵ Cockburn stressed that duelling was particularly heinous because 'it is not only an Opposition to particular express Laws as other Crimes, but it has a Tendency to subvert Government it self, which is a Divine Institution'.⁹⁶

The aristocratic and gentlemanly culture of duelling could thus open the door to anarchy or at least pose a serious threat to the hierarchical society. Duelling, Jeremy Collier thundered, 'is such an Affront to the *Constitution*, such a deliberate Contempt, such an open Defiance of Authority, as nothing can be more. It makes the Laws cheap and ridiculous, the Solemnities of Justice a piece of Pageantry, the Bench a few Reverend Poppets, or Scharamouche's in *Scarlet*'.⁹⁷ All honour came originally from the king. It followed that those who acted against the king and the law *ipso facto* forfeited their nobility. If you deny this, Collier argued, 'you unavoidably run into the Principle of Levelling'. If honour, as everything else, did not depend on the king and the law but on 'any private Set of People', it meant that 'every one is at Liberty to rate his own, and his Neighbour's Station, as he pleases'.⁹⁸ Duelling was thus not merely to defy the king's explicit commandments; it was also to embrace the levelling principles of democracy, according to which one's reputation depended on other people's opinion – to claim that honour was horizontal.

On the other hand, it was often pointed out that, rather than wasting their courage and perhaps lives as well in duels, men should be willing

⁹⁵ C[omber], *A discourse*, p. 25; Collier, *Essays*, p. 122.

⁹⁶ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 201–2.

⁹⁷ Collier, *Essays*, p. 115.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 107–8.

to sacrifice them to their *patria*. Echoing Francis Bacon, Allestree emphasised that, if a man wanted to show his ‘active valour’, he should be ready to expose ‘himself to all warrantable dangers, when any publick occasion of hazard is offerd’.⁹⁹ Fighting for the honour of one’s country and for one’s own personal reputation were contradictory rather than complementary enterprises, as the defenders of duelling had claimed. Duellists were sometimes compared with such cruel tyrants as Caesar and Alexander the Great, who were said to have used their swords to satisfy their lust for power and empire. Duellists thus contrasted sharply with such ‘patriots’ as Cato, Cicero and ‘our gallant Ancestors’, whose ‘Virtues claim the juster Place’ than a duelling field.¹⁰⁰

Closely related to this line of thought was of course the equally Baconian idea that small insults should rather be ignored than found offensive. Hobbes echoed Bacon when he exclaimed that issuing a challenge for ‘words of disgrace or some little injuries’ was far from punishable crime because for these petty insults ‘they that made the Lawes, had assigned no punishment, nor thought it worthy of a man that hath the use of Reason, to take notice of’.¹⁰¹ Thomas Comber also disagreed with the duellists who claimed that the law did not provide sufficient satisfaction for injuries. The duellists could only hold this view because they were looking ‘on the Injury through the Magnifying Glass of Pride and Passion’. Thus, just like Bacon seventy years earlier, Comber poked fun at the thin skin of many gentlemen. The laws were right in ignoring these petty insults; otherwise they would ‘be as ridiculous as Drink and Rage makes Hectors, if they should set down severe Penalties for an innocent Jest, a hasty Word, or an accidental Blow’.¹⁰²

Another familiar argument which was often reaffirmed was the example of the ancient Romans. Hobbes again echoed Bacon when he wrote that ‘the offence men take, from contumely, in words, or gesture, when they produce no other harme, than the present grieve of him that is reproached, hath been neglected in the Lawes of the Greeks, Romans, and other both antient, and moderne Commonwealths’.¹⁰³ In 1712 it was argued that the Greeks and Romans had always vindicated their questioned honour by legal means. They had been ‘Men of nice Resentment, refined Manners, proud, cholerick, and brave enough’; they had esteemed ‘nothing more than Valour’, had despised ‘nothing more than

⁹⁹ Allestree, *The gentlemen calling*, p. 152. John Norris, *A collection of miscellanries: consisting of poems, essays, discourses, and letters, occasionally written* (Oxford, 1687), pp. 168–9.

¹⁰⁰ [Anon.], *The duel a poem*, pp. 4–7.

¹⁰¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 206–7.

¹⁰² C[omber], *A Discourse*, pp. 21–2, 35–7.

¹⁰³ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 213.

Cowardice', and had been 'free to all private Methods of Vindication'. Yet, there had not been a single duel in either Greece or Rome; they had not even dreamt 'of any solemn Revenges but from their Laws'.¹⁰⁴

Just as in the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, there were two distinct ways of trying to abolish duelling. First, an important part of this programme, which saw duelling as a direct antithesis of law and government, was of course the attempts to pass anti-duelling legislation.¹⁰⁵ The second and even more important part of the same programme was in the late seventeenth century, as in the early part of the same century, the debate about the extent to which the law should satisfy the demands of the duellists. As we have seen, there had been a sharp disagreement over whether the law should provide an alternative satisfaction for insulted gentlemen. Some had thought that the common law provided sufficient rules for serious insult. As to the small insults, such as the lie given, the common law ignored them and so should the lawmaker and hence also the gentleman. Of course, some had also argued that the law should provide satisfaction for even these small insults and that a court of honour was seen as the best institution for solving these disputes of points of honour.

One peculiar feature of the early eighteenth-century anti-duelling campaign was that the English were constantly referring to French examples of curbing duelling. The French example was sometimes used in urging the English to adopt stern measures and harsh punishment against duelling. But as in the earlier part of the seventeenth century so in its latter part the French example lent strong support for endeavours to set up a court of honour as an alternative to duelling. Duelling was increasingly defended as an important defence of British freedom. Against such a Whig argument, some of their anti-duelling opponents bestowed fulsome praise on the staunchest enemy of British liberty. In 1675 Sir Richard Temple, speaking in the House of Commons, argued that 'the great occasion of duels is, that the law gives not remedy proportionable to injuries received'. Things were otherwise on the other side of the Channel. 'In *France*', Temple reminded the MPs, 'a strict course is taken to repair men in their honour, wherein the law is defective; as 'tis in some things men highly esteem, as affrontive words.'¹⁰⁶ The success of

¹⁰⁴ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 25–6.

¹⁰⁵ Hobbes's solution in the Latin version of *Leviathan* was to compel gentlemen to take an oath not to send or accept challenges. Breaking this oath would make a gentleman lose his honour, *Leviathan. Sive de materia, firma et potestate civitatis ecclesiasticae et civilis* (Amsterdam, 1670), p. 160; Thomas 1965, pp. 194–6.

¹⁰⁶ *Debates of the House of Commons*, III, p. 341.

Louis XIV's anti-duelling campaign, it was widely argued, hinged crucially on both the strict enforcement of the measures against duelling and an equally strict legal enforcement of the points of honour. *The laws of honour* from 1685 provided an updated account of the French anti-duelling provisions. The non-juror Jeremy Collier also pointed out that in France 'the Practice of Duelling is absolutely suppressed, and they are all contented to refer their Grievances to the Government'. He declared: 'The French King takes more care to right a Gentleman's Honour than is done with us.' But, even Collier could not be certain, whether such a system where the king 'must be little less than absolute' suited the English.¹⁰⁷

By the early eighteenth century reference to the successful French anti-duelling legislation became even more widespread. Another non-juror, Charles Leslie, noted in 1707 that 'we have heard as Remarkable Instances of the Just Severity of the French King in Punishing those who offer'd any *Affront* to another', and added that Louis XIV 'has *Civiliz'd* his *People* beyond any others in *Europe*'. Lest someone accused him of treason, Leslie pointed out that 'it was Lawful to Learn *Good* from an *Enemy*'.¹⁰⁸ John Cockburn, who had also not been prepared to transfer his allegiance to William and had stayed at Saint-Germain for a while, was yet another anti-duelling campaigner who referred to the French example. Louis XIV had used a court of honour, whose task it was to consider 'Provocations of all Kinds and of all Degrees' and to provide 'a proper and Reasonable Satisfaction for them'. Several of the French and other similar edicts and regulations were appended to Cockburn's treatise.¹⁰⁹ Little wonder that John Oldmixon and other defenders of duelling saw these anti-duelling arguments as a particularly great menace.

But it was not only those who refused their allegiance to William and Mary who employed the French example. In 1704 Daniel Defoe was harping on the French arrangements for the court of honour.¹¹⁰ In 1713, in the aftermath of the Hamilton–Mohun duel, there appeared *An account of the abolishing of duels in France* which was by and large another edition of *The laws of honor* from 1685.¹¹¹ The third edition of this work appeared in 1720, 'on the occasion of the bill now depending in Parliament'.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Collier, *Essays*, pp. 121–2. ¹⁰⁸ [Charles Leslie], *The Rehearsal*, no. 191 (15 March 1707).

¹⁰⁹ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 343–8, 361–458.

¹¹⁰ Defoe, *A Review of the affairs of France*, no. 16 (29 April 1704), p. 78; no. 17 (2 May 1704), pp. 81–2; no. 18 (6 May 1704), pp. 85–7; no. 19 (9 May 1704), pp. 89–90; no. 21 (16 May 1704), pp. 97–8; no. 22 (20 May 1704), pp. 101–2.

¹¹¹ [Anon.], *An account of the abolishing of duels in France* (London, 1713). See also [anon.], *A full and exact relation*, pp. 17–22.

¹¹² [Anon.], *The court of honour*, pp. [i–ii].

Sir John Edgar wrote in *The Theatre* in early March 1720 that 'as we have from time to time imitated the Follies of *France*, almost to our Ruin, there are now Hopes of following that Nation in the one thing, wherein they excel us'.¹¹³

Underlying many of these exhortations to follow the French example was an attempt to find alternative satisfaction for the insulted gentleman. Cockburn admitted that there was 'a Defect in our Laws' and that it was 'to be wished that they did condescend more expressly to such minute Offences, as usually provoke to fatal Revenges'. The reason why Cockburn thought the duelling theory and its detailed rules about insults were to be taken seriously was that 'there ought to be severe Sanctions against such Things as have important ill Consequences, thro' ill Custom or the Perverseness of Men, how little or inconsiderable soeuer in themselves'.¹¹⁴ Since men took the duelling theory seriously, the laws, in order to discharge their proper duty, must comply with it as much as possible.

Perhaps the most revealing analysis to this effect can be found in the bill introduced into the House of Lords by the duke of York in April 1668 in the aftermath of the Buckingham–Shrewsbury duel. Just like the earl of Northampton fifty-five years earlier, the Lords argued that it was 'just that reparations be made for injuries'. And a man was justified to think himself injured as soon as his horizontal honour was questioned. 'Every man', the Lords argued, 'believes himselfe injured by those who value him lesse then he doth himselfe.' It followed, as they were quick to point out, that 'men doe frequently seeke reparacion from those that doe undervalue them by sending of challenges and fighting of duells'.¹¹⁵ The bill thus accepted the entire theory underlying duelling, but not the duel itself. It comes as no surprise then that the main task the bill set for itself was to provide an alternative solution to these 'pernicious acts'. As the bill put it, 'whereas disgraceful and provoking words, gestures, and actions, the contending about place and precedency, and usurpations of arms and other ensigns of honour, have and will, unless prevented, occasion duels and other mischievous acts of force', it offered an alternative way of solving these disputes.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Richard Steele, *The Theatre*, ed. John Loftis (Oxford, 1962), no. 26 (29 March 1720), p. 110. For other examples see e.g. [anon.], *The humour of duelling*, p. 6. See also T. S., *A dissertation concerning the evil nature and fatal consequence of immoderate anger and revenge* (London, 1725), pp. 27–35; Richard Steele, *The antidote. Number II. In a letter to the free-thinker. Occasion'd by later actions between Dr. Woodward and Dr. Mead* [1719], in Rae Blanchard ed., *Tracts and pamphlets by Richard Steele* (Baltimore, 1994), pp. 511–19.

¹¹⁴ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 322–3.

¹¹⁵ HL, Ellesmere MS no. 405, fo. 1^r.

¹¹⁶ HMC, 8th report, appendix, p. 122.

The solution was a familiar one. The bill provided ‘that the Earle Marshall’ or his commissioners ‘shall be impowered to heare and determine all differences touching the point of honour, and to award reparacons for offences done against the same, and to determine all complaints betweene the Nobility and Gentry, occasioned by any disgracefull words or Actions’.¹¹⁷ But the Lords were not content simply to offer an alternative to the duel. They further endeavoured to change the way in which people conferred horizontal honour. The bill declared that whereas ‘the fighting of duels . . . has hitherto been erroneously reputed honourable, and all persons who refuse to accept challenges are subject to scorn and contempt’, from now on ‘any person who sends, accepts, or carries a challenge shall be made incapable of holding any degree or title of honour or precedence’ and ‘shall be reputed a person of dishonour and infamy’.¹¹⁸

As we have seen, Francis Bacon had severely criticised similar Jacobean plans. He had been convinced that, rather than halting duelling, such provisions, by adopting the same notions of civility, honour and insults as the duelling theory, had only encouraged gentlemen to challenge and fight one another. How easily the line of thinking where duelling theory, though not the duel, was accepted could in fact lend credence to duelling emerges from two early eighteenth-century pamphlets, one written in favour of and the other against duelling. In his defence of duelling, William Machrie declared in 1711 that ‘all Laws against repairing Men’s Honour by Duelling, are unjust, and of themselves Null, untill States and Sovereigns provide for its Reparation, by erecting Courts of Honour’. For Machrie, duelling and a court of honour were more or less equivalent.¹¹⁹

The most ingenuous legal solution to duelling was offered by the author of ‘A letter to a member of parliament, to prevent shedding of much blood by duels, by allowing every man to fight’, which was, significantly, appended to *The court of honour* explicating the French laws, rules and ordinances against duels in 1720.¹²⁰ The point of departure of the anonymous author (with the classic initials N. N.) of the letter was the exact opposite to Bacon’s and others who had argued that in order to get rid of duelling you have to get rid of the concomitant theory. The author instead pointed out that we must embrace it wholeheartedly if we are to fight seriously against duelling.

¹¹⁷ HL, Ellesmere MS no. 405, fo. 1^r. ¹¹⁸ HMC, 8th report, appendix I, p. 122.

¹¹⁹ Machrie, *An essay upon duelling*, p. 8. See also [anon.], *The soldier’s guide: being an essay offer’d to all that profession* (London, 1686), pp. 87, 96–7.

¹²⁰ [Anon.], *The court of honour*, pp. 94–100.

In his practical suggestions the author went a step further than those who suggested setting up an effective court of honour and thus to provide a legal remedy for petty insults. He argued that to accept a duel in strictly limited cases and under strictly limited circumstances would provide the best solution to rampant duelling. 'I am apt to think', the author wrote, 'no Law they [i.e. the houses of parliament] can make will prevent Duels, unless they authorize them, unless they make them lawful; provided the Duellists first apply to the Magistrate.' The author was anxious to expel any accusation of atheism, explaining that he was a pious member of the Church of England and that his suggestion was not made on the spur of the moment but had been in gestation 'these many years'. What must be clear to everyone, he firmly believed, was that all conceivable punishments and remedies for duelling had turned out to be completely ineffective. So, he posed the question, why not follow the 'natural Justice' of 'school-boys', who always wanted to have an equal fight. Having described the various ways in which schoolboys guaranteed an equal fight, the author concluded: 'Something like their impartial Methods . . . should be establish'd by Law, for the Fighting of grown Men; and chosen Magistrates should regulate and appoint those Methods'. To justify his proposal, the author had resort to a typical pro-duelling point: the clear advantage of these 'Tryals by Battle' was that they 'would prevent Men from insulting one another, and so preserve good Manners'. But the author was also convinced that this form of fighting would in fact put an end to fights 'upon slight Quarrels', because they would always 'end in the Death of one of the Parties'.

How seriously this suggestion was made is difficult to judge but there is certainly some irony in the author's claim that he had got the idea from Bacon's 'Charge against Duels', where Bacon had allegedly claimed that 'where the Municipal Laws of a Country hath not taken Care to make a Man Reparation for an Affront, he is at Liberty to right himself'. 'And', the author went on, 'methinks it should be so.'

CONTESTED CIVILITY

Although religious and legal vocabularies were often employed in anti-duelling literature the most vociferous and systematic, powerful and sustained criticism came, as in the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, from the tradition of morality and civility.¹²¹ Duelling did not loom large in

¹²¹ See e.g. [anon.], *Honours preservation*, sig. A2^r.

the agenda for Societies for the Reformation of Manners, but its opponents linked it closely with more general moral corruption. It became typical to couple duelling with other social vices like ‘Whoring, Drunkenness’ and ‘Blasphemy’, as Defoe did in 1704.¹²² In his massive *A view of ancient laws, against immorality and profaneness* (1729), John Disney included duelling in the long list of various forms of immorality.¹²³ When Anthony Holbrook published his anti-duelling sermon in 1727, he hoped that it would contribute to ‘reforming our Manners and conducting Life’.¹²⁴

Whereas anti-duelling criticism could thus be couched in strongly moralist terms, duelling was, as we have seen, firmly entrenched in the discourse of civility. It would be tempting to conclude therefore that the debate about duelling should essentially be seen as a contest between morality and manners. As Anna Bryson has recently demonstrated, there was, throughout the early modern period, an ongoing tradition of criticising formal behaviour, empty courtesies and outright flatteries. Whilst much of this criticism, or ‘objections to civility’, as Bryson calls it, ultimately stemmed from medieval anti-court literature, she has depicted it as a conflict between morality and manners, between ethics and ‘social imperatives’, or between ‘the moral status’ and ‘the social rules’.¹²⁵ It is easy to find material supporting her case. William Darrell juxtaposed civility and Christianity, pointing out that ‘if my *Rusticity* will once open *Heaven’s Gate*, I shall be Happier than They, whose *Civility*, will plunge them into *Misery*’.¹²⁶ In 1693, one writer talked about ‘mischievous Civility’, which was defined as ‘preferring a Ceremony before our Souls’.¹²⁷ Such a juxtaposition was especially noticeable in Quaker pamphlets. Thus Benjamin Furly castigated ‘the worlds honour’, reminding his readers that ‘a man may make as great a shew of honour with his Hat, and Complements, many Good-morrows, and Good-nights &c. when he not onely not honours thee, but hates thee in his heart’.¹²⁸

¹²² Defoe, *A Review of the Affairs of France*, no. 21 (16 May 1704), p. 99; no. 24 (27 May 1704), p. 111. Jeremy Collier, *A short view of the immorality, and profaneness of the English stage* (London, 1698), p. 283.

¹²³ Disney, *A view of ancient laws*, pp. 317–21; cf. Disney, *An essay upon the execution of the laws against immorality and profaneness* (London, 1708) and Disney, *A second essay*, neither of which mentioned duelling.

¹²⁴ Holbrook, *Christian essays*, p. 28. ¹²⁵ Anna Bryson 1998, ch. 6.

¹²⁶ William Darrell, *The vanity of human respects. In a sermon* (London, 1688), pp. 23, 21.

¹²⁷ [Anon.], *Divine and moral discourses on divers subjects* (London, 1693), p. 67. See also e.g. Matthew Heynes, *A sermon for the reformation of manners preach’d at St. Paul’s Church in Bedford, at the assizes there held, March the 15th, 1700* (London, 1701), p. 13.

¹²⁸ B[enjamin] F[urly], *The worlds honour detected, and, for the unprofitableness thereof, rejected* (London, 1663), p. 12. See in general, e.g. George Fox, *Here may you see what was the true honour amongst the Jewes* (London, 1660).

As we have seen, a central aspect of the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign had been constituted by a severe criticism of external and theatrical civil courtesy, and there is little question that such criticism recurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, although much of the anti-duelling criticism can be called moral or moralistic, there is an alternative way of looking at the tension between morality and civility. The anonymous author whom I have just cited talked about 'mischievous Civility' rather than mere 'civility'. In *Some thoughts concerning education*, John Locke mentioned '*mistaken civility*',¹²⁹ and another author called it 'subtil and Insinuating Civility'.¹³⁰ If we move to the early eighteenth century we meet Richard Steele, Joseph Addison and the third earl of Shaftesbury, objecting not only to duelling but also to many of the forms of behaviour which were the focus of 'objections to civility'. Are we then to conclude that Addison, Steele and Shaftesbury were objecting to civility?

If Steele, Addison or Shaftesbury had a coherent programme or project, it would not be utterly misleading to describe it as a programme of politeness or civility. These programmes embraced pungent criticism of the court and the High Church party, as well as the entire culture (including e.g. opera) associated with them.¹³¹ This would suggest that in criticising certain forms of politeness, Addison and Steele and many similarly minded theorists were neither characterising a new culture of politeness nor formulating objections to civility, but were rather engaged in defining or perhaps redefining these concepts. Much of the criticism against civility came precisely from those writers who were primarily concerned with that very notion. Their criticism was not meant as a wholesale repudiation of civility and politeness, but rather as an attempt to put forward an alternative definition of it. Civility was, in other words, a hotly contested notion. There was not one, single generally accepted interpretation of civility and politeness, but rather a multivocality.¹³² What we find is a fierce debate about civility and thus a marked disagreement over what counted as true civility and politeness.¹³³

The contested nature of civility is revealed on a rather practical level by Abel Boyer. Underlying his analysis of 'conversation, society, civility'

¹²⁹ Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 203.

¹³⁰ [Anon.], *The country gentleman's vade mecum: or his companion for the town* (London, 1699), p. 40. See also S. L., *Remarques on the humours and conversations of the town* (London, 1673), p. 47.

¹³¹ For Addison and Steele see e.g. Phillipson 1993, pp. 225–6; for Shaftesbury see Klein 1994; for opera see Knif 1995.

¹³² For parallel developments in France see Gordon 1994, especially ch. 3; France 1992, pp. 64–72.

¹³³ This is well brought out by implication in Klein 1984, especially pp. 191–9; Klein 1994, pp. 8–9, 175–94, and Phillipson 1993, p. 226.

was clearly an anxiety about the true nature of them. As he pointed out, ‘we meet with many dangerous *Civilities* in the World’.¹³⁴ Shaftesbury set ‘a true politeness’ against ‘the corruption or wrong use of pleasantry and humour’.¹³⁵ Of course, there were only ‘few so affectedly clownish as absolutely to disown good breeding and renounce the notion of a beauty in outward manners and deportment’. But there was also a bitter conflict within the culture of politeness over its proper definition. As Shaftesbury noted, ‘the contest is only, “Which is right, which the unaffected carriage and just demeanour and which the affected and false”’.¹³⁶

The account of civility as a contested notion has an immediate bearing upon our interpretation of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century anti-duelling campaign. Rather than seeing duelling merely as a relatively simple social problem to be sorted out by new legislation, many of the critics confessed, as Bacon and others had done before them, that duelling was essentially an ideological problem which needed a concomitant solution. It was clearly not enough to enact anti-duelling legislation; it was of far greater importance to challenge its ideological basis.

The ideological refutation of duelling in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century took place within the larger ideological debate about the true meaning of civility and politeness. If we are to understand what the anti-duelling campaigners in late seventeenth-century England were primarily about, we should not see them as merely trying to criticise an isolated social phenomenon of duelling, but rather as making a strenuous attempt to undermine an ideology whose skewed and menacing nature was perhaps best represented by the folly of duelling. For those, like Addison and Steele, or Shaftesbury, whose chief interest was the redefinition of civility, attacking duelling, just like criticising opera, was only a part, though a highly important one, of this entire project. But even many of those who were primarily concerned with anti-duelling campaigning endeavoured to refute duelling on very similar grounds. Of course, practical solutions based on religious and legal assumptions were offered, but the main aim of many of the critics was to discredit the entire theory of duelling and the underlying notions of civility and politeness. To claim that civility included something as barbarous and ridiculous as the rules of duelling was, the opponents of duelling and the attendant notion of civility asserted, not only an oxymoron – it was an outright contradiction in terms.

¹³⁴ Boyer, *Characters*, p. 28.

¹³⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 34–5.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

The notions of civility and politeness were widely accepted in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. There was a remarkable unanimity about the centrality of pleasing and agreeable behaviour. The crux of civility and politeness was a comportment which would be agreeable and pleasing to those with whom one socialised. But this consensus failed to conceal fundamental variances between different definitions of civility.

Perhaps the most obviously contested aspect of civility and politeness was the actual site where the highest and best forms of civility were acted. As we have seen, many argued that civility was the special quality of the court. But it was even more common to castigate the civility prevalent in the court as mere empty formality and ceremony. The earl of Shannon was convinced that 'a Court Life' consisted of 'common Complements, but little Reality'.¹³⁷ 'But I desire', wrote John Locke to Anthony Collins in 1703, 'that noe thing of the court guise may mix in our conversation.'¹³⁸ The courtier was often depicted as an empty shell. 'In Courts', Richard Steele wrote, 'you see Good-will is spoken with great Warmth, Ill-will cover'd with great Civility.' He wondered how a man, in becoming a courtier, was able to 'get over the Natural Existence and Possession of his own Mind so far, as to take delight either in paying or receiving such cold and repeated Civilities'.¹³⁹ Jonathan Swift agreed. 'Courts', he pointed out, 'are the worst of all schools to teach good manners.'¹⁴⁰ In *The Examiner*, 'the Art of Courts' consisted precisely of 'the means by which treacherous Enemies are to a Miracle transform'd into faithful Friends, profess'd Admirers, and most obsequious Flatterers'.¹⁴¹

Closely linked to this run-of-the-mill criticism of the court was the castigation of formal and theatrical, conceited and external civility. Richard Lingard, a professor of divinity at Dublin, was convinced that such behaviour was 'certainly best, which best expressed the *sincerity* of your Heart'. This kind of behaviour was said to produce both '*comity* and *affability*', being a 'mixture made up of *civilities* and *freedom*'. Lingard contrasted this with 'a *starckt formall behaviour*' which he found 'odious'.

¹³⁷ Francis Boyle, earl of Shannon, *Moral essays and discourses upon several subjects, chiefly relating to the present times* (London, 1690), p. 4.

¹³⁸ John Locke to Anthony Collins, 18 June 1703 in John Locke, *The correspondence of John Locke*, ed. F. S. de Beer (8 vols., Oxford, 1989), viii, p. 16. I owe this reference to Sami Savonius.

¹³⁹ *The Tatler*, no. 53, I, p. 374; see also no. 127, II, pp. 244–5, no. 21, I, p. 167; *The Spectator*, no. 193, II, p. 257.

¹⁴⁰ Jonathan Swift, 'Hints on good-manners', in *The prose works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (16 vols., Oxford, 1939–74), IV, pp. 219–22, at pp. 221, 222.

¹⁴¹ *The Examiner*, no. 50, 5–12 July 1711. See also Butler, *Characters*, p. 69; L[ewis] G[riffin], *Essayes and characters* (London, 1661), pp. 27–9.

As long as civility was kept within proper limits it was highly desirable. As Lingard put it, ‘none is more *melled* with a civility then an *Englishman*, but he loves not you should be verbose and ceremonious in it, take heed therefore of *overacting* your civilities’.¹⁴² In 1695, Abel Boyer was more outright, arguing that formal ceremonies ultimately inhibited proper sociability and civility. ‘Formal *Civilities* and *Ceremonies*’, he wrote, ‘are a kind of Tyranny, which render Men unsociable, even in Society it self.’¹⁴³

As Lawrence Klein has emphasised, the criticism of the court formed an important part of Shaftesbury’s project of politeness. According to Klein, Shaftesbury used ‘notions of sociability and politeness to attack the Tory loyalty to Church and Court in the name of a new Whiggish culture’. He thus contrasted true politeness to courtly politeness,¹⁴⁴ and argued that ‘the very language of the Court’ was ‘now banished the Town and all good company’.¹⁴⁵

The argument that there was both natural and proper as well as formal and improper civility was widely endorsed. In 1673, one pamphleteer wanted to distance ‘true Curtisie, Charity, Civility, and the Duty of Good Language’ altogether from ‘a Vitious sort of Buffoonry, that this mistaken Age is ready to cry up for a high acquir’d *Ornament* and Piece of Refin’d *Education*’. Whereas true civility consisted of ‘a *sober Judgment*’ and ‘*modest Innocence*’, this new vicious way was nothing but ‘*Raillerie a la mode*’.¹⁴⁶ According to William Darrell, the wrong kind of civility was the one exercised by ‘Fops’ or ‘Beaus’, who ‘refine Breeding too much’. Their defining characteristic was being ‘a Compound of Farce and Ceremony, a Mixture of *Mimick* and *Tragedian*’.¹⁴⁷

The juxtaposition between proper and improper civility was sometimes couched in terms of competition between Christian and secular notions of civility. According to Leonard Willan, ‘Humility and Concord are the most proper Figures of a Civil Conversation’ leading directly to God.¹⁴⁸ The Jansenist Pierre Nicole emphasised that all human civility was based on nothing but vanity. ‘There are’, he declared, ‘very few

¹⁴² R[ichard] L[ingard], *A letter of advice to a young gentleman leaving the university, concerning his behaviour and conversation in the world* (Dublin, 1670), pp. 18, 20–1, 28, 30.

¹⁴³ Boyer, *Characters*, p. 27. See in general Carter 2001, pp. 57–60, 126–7.

¹⁴⁴ Klein 1994, pp. 8–9, 175–6, 151–3, 183–94.

¹⁴⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 31, see also pp. 238, 411–12, 426–7; Klein 1999, pp. xvii–xviii.

¹⁴⁶ [Anon.], *Raillerie a la mode consider’d*, preface, pp. 3, 6.

¹⁴⁷ [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, p. 43. See also [Daniel Defoe], *The compleat English tradesman* (London, 1727), II, pt II, pp. 119–20.

¹⁴⁸ Leonard Willan, *The exact politician, or, compleat statesman* (London, 1670), p. 99. But cf. Gilbert Burnet, *A sermon preach’d before the queen, at White-hall, on the 11 th of March, 1694* (London, 1694), p. 17. I owe this reference to Andrea Branchi.

civilities which ought to please us, even according to humane reason; because there are very few which are sincere and disinterested.’¹⁴⁹ When Nicole discussed ‘Christian Civility’ he acknowledged its seemingly contradictory character; civility always seemed to carry a strong tendency towards self-love. ‘Humane Civility’ was nothing ‘but a kind of traffick of Self-love, wherein we endeavour to buy the affection of others, by owing a kindness for them’. But Christian civility meant charity which was the opposite of self-love. ‘Our only endeavour’, Nicole insisted, ‘must be to make our Civility different from that of Men of the World.’¹⁵⁰

In Jacques Esprit’s analysis the proper form of civility was also based on Christianity. According to his definition, civility meant ‘to honour and mutually to esteem one another’. This was clearly in harmony with the fundamental precepts of Christianity, which recommended ‘the preservation of Concord one among another’ and that one was ‘always ready to pay mutual Honour and Civility, without expecting Retaliation’. Far otherwise was it for those ‘who discharge the Duties of Civility out of designs purely Human’. They carried out these duties only to appear ‘men of Breeding and polish’d Behaviour’. Underlying this human civility was pure self-interest, which, of course, made human civility ‘a deceitful Vertue’.¹⁵¹

It was above all the contrast between formal behaviour and affectation on the one hand and natural and simple behaviour on the other which formed one of the key themes in Addison and Steele’s periodical literature. Dedicating *The Tatler* to Mr Maynwaring, they declared that ‘the general Purpose of this Paper, is to expose the false Arts of Life, to pull off the Disguises of Cunning, Vanity, and Affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our Dress, our Discourse and our Behaviour’.¹⁵² When composing *The Spectator*, their aim had remained constant. The purpose was ‘to bring People to an unconcerned Behaviour’.¹⁵³ And they duly practised in composing their periodicals what they had preached at the outset. When *The Tatler* ran several articles on behaviour and conduct the guiding assumption was the entirely familiar one that men aimed at ‘gaining either the Affection or the Esteem of those with whom they converse’.¹⁵⁴ The real success in winning the esteem of our conversants

¹⁴⁹ [Pierre Nicole], *Moral essays, contain’d in several treatises on many important duties*, transl. [anon.] (4 vols., London, 1676–84), I, pp. 284–5. For Nicole see Van Kley 1987; Keohane 1980, pp. 293–303.

¹⁵⁰ [Nicole], *Moral essays*, II, pp. 233–6, 245, 249, 252–5.

¹⁵¹ [Esprit], *The falshood of human virtue*, pp. 90–4. For Esprit see Keohane 1980, pp. 307–8. For another French example see Chartier 1987, pp. 88–94.

¹⁵² *The Tatler*, I, p. 8. ¹⁵³ *The Spectator*, no. 34, I, pp. 144–5; no. 87, I, p. 369.

¹⁵⁴ *The Tatler*, no. 206, III, p. 93.

was wholly predicated on the simplicity and naturalness of our conduct.¹⁵⁵ ‘Simplicity’ was ‘the best and truest Ornament of most Things in Life, which the politer Ages always aimed at’ and was juxtaposed with ‘the Affectation of Politeness’.¹⁵⁶ In *The Spectator* Steele assured that the capability ‘to please and oblige’ was said to be possible when one is ‘unconfined to Modes and Forms’.¹⁵⁷ The attempt to please never failed if it arose from ‘innate Benevolence’ and never succeeded if it arose ‘from a Vanity to excell’.¹⁵⁸ Little wonder then that they also described their entire project as ‘Discourses of Virtue and Morality’.¹⁵⁹

That Addison and Steele essayed to uphold a certain form of civility and politeness whilst criticising another one becomes clear in their highly revealing account of the history of the civilising process. The general development had for a long time been towards ever more formal civility, until fairly recently there had occurred ‘a very great Revolution’ back towards the simpler forms of politeness:

Several obliging Deferencies, Condescensions and Submissions, with many outward Forms and Ceremonies that accompnay them, were first of all brought up among the politer Part of Mankind who lived in Courts and Cities, and distinguished themselves from the Rustick part of the Species . . . by such a mutual Complaisance and Intercourse of Civilities. These Forms of Conversation by degrees multiplied and grew troublesome; the Modish World found too great a Constraint in them, and have therefore thrown most of them aside . . . At present therefore an unconstrained Carriage, and a certain Openness of Behaviour are the height of Good Breeding. The Fashionable World is grown free and easie; our Manners, sit more loose upon us: Nothing is so modish as an agreeable Negligence.¹⁶⁰

Addison and Steele were strongly arguing against formal civility and politeness and in its stead advocated free, simple and natural manners of politeness. In 1683, it had been argued that ‘the Art of all civil Converse’ had dramatically improved in England, and ‘their former stiff form of conversing is now changed into a free, brisk, and lively air, which is the very Life of Conversation’. Similarly, Bellegarde wrote that ‘the use of Ceremonies is almost out of date’.¹⁶¹

Shaftesbury’s polarisation between true civility and a skewed one was based on a similar analysis. Whereas the former consisted of ‘a true Relish

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 206, III, pp. 93–7.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 230, III, pp. 195, 190; no. 214, III, p. 124.

¹⁵⁷ *The Spectator*, no. 2, I, p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 280, II, pp. 590–1.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 262, II, p. 517.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 119, I, pp. 486–7.

¹⁶¹ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, pp. 116–17; Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon ridicule*, p. 350, see also pp. 366–7; Bellegarde, *The modes*, pp. 32–3.

and simplicity in Things or Manners', the latter was a 'dazzling' politeness.¹⁶² Indeed, men were exceptionally liable to too much politeness. But they should always retain some of their 'natural roughness', otherwise theatrical politeness could set in. 'Whatever politeness', Shaftesbury wrote, 'we may pretend to, it is more a disfigurement than any real refinement of discourse to render it thus delicate.'¹⁶³ If theatrical politeness was given too central a place, men would spend far too much of their time and energy in attempting 'to adjust and compose their mien, according to the right mode' – to 'one single peculiar air, to which it was necessary all people should conform'. This would eventually lead to a 'universal confusion' where 'plain nature' and 'a vizard' could be taken for each other. Politeness, in other words, must never wholly conceal our true nature.¹⁶⁴

An important part in this contrast between the two kinds of civility was played by flattery and sincerity. As we have seen, many sixteenth-century courtesy theorists had openly pleaded for the importance of flattery and dissimulation in civil courtesy, and similar views were still sometimes defended in the latter part of the century. At the same time, many of those authors who opposed theatrical civility wanted above all to distance themselves as clearly as possible from any forms of flattery. It was seen as a central characteristic of the misleading and perilous politeness. Many late seventeenth-century authors closely followed the well-established tradition that flattery was especially prominent in the court. Josiah Dare called flattery 'this *foul Hypocrisie, Court Holy Water, dishonest Civility, and base Merchandise of Praises and Commendations*'.¹⁶⁵ According to another author, many imagined that 'the Art of pleasing consists in flat and officious lies'.¹⁶⁶

Although many defenders of flattery worked hard to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable flattery, or between complaisance and flattery, many of their critics brushed such subtle distinctions aside and condemned both notions at the same time. It was highly misleading, according to Swift, to associate civility and flattery. Of course, the aim of flattery was ostensibly the same as that of civility – to please other people and show our esteem of them. Yet, flattery always failed to bring these results. As Swift put it, 'flattery is the worst, and falsest way of shewing our esteem'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Cited in Klein 1994, p. 175. ¹⁶³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 233.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 39–40. See also Klein 1994, pp. 78, 94; Agnew 1986, p. 167.

¹⁶⁵ Dare, *Counsellor manners*, p. 70. See also e.g. B. B., *The Young gentlemen way to honour*, pp. 67–9.

¹⁶⁶ D. A., *The whole art of converse*, p. 52. ¹⁶⁷ Swift, 'Hints on good-manners', p. 221.

In Saint-Evremond's analysis, it was precisely complaisance which was roundly criticised. In order to gain '*the applause of the people*', men were only preoccupied with accommodating their behaviour to those with whom they were conversing, committing 'voluntary Fopperies to agree with real Fops'. They only endeavoured to 'adapt themselves to all sorts of Characters with so dextrous a compliance, that one would say, Their humors is that of all others'. Saint-Evremond was convinced that this complaisance was doubly deceiving. First, men abandoned their true selves. Second, and much more disturbingly, these shenanigans invariably failed to bring the desired result. 'These persons', Saint-Evremond wrote, 'with all their *good humour* and *complaisance*, with all their *feints* and their *dissimulations*, ever arrive at the point which they propose to themselves.' These people of complaisance stood in a stark contrast to those who by their virtues and 'the *Goodness of their Nature*' had 'made *Partisans* even of their *own Enemies*'.¹⁶⁸

Steele's account was strikingly similar. In his vitriolic against flattery he admitted that men were often overcome 'by such soft Insinuations and ensnaring Compliances'. Nonetheless, one's natural character was a much more efficacious method. Steele declared in *The Spectator* that

there is no Temper, no Disposition so rude and untractable, but may in its own peculiar Cast and Turn be brought to some agreeable Use in Conversation, or in the Affairs of Life. A Person of a rougher Deportment, and less tied up to the usual Ceremonies of Behaviour, will . . . please by the Grace which Nature gives to every Action wherein she is complied with; the Brisk and Lively will not want their Admirers, and even a more Reserv'd and Melancholly Temper may at some Times be agreeable.¹⁶⁹

The aim was pleasing those one happened to converse with, but this was not achieved by complaisance but rather by one's own natural behaviour. Again Shaftesbury agreed. The opposite of the 'agreeable' politeness was 'a malicious complaisance, to the humour of a company'.¹⁷⁰ In one of his notebooks he added that 'Politeness' should be 'consistent with Simplicity' and warned himself of him who 'calles Politeness, a more refin'd sort of Flattery'.¹⁷¹

If true civility had nothing to do with flattery or complaisance, it had equally little to do with a servile obedience to the demands of fashion.

¹⁶⁸ Saint-Evremond, *Miscellany essays*, II, pp. 20–3.

¹⁶⁹ *The Spectator*, no. 238, II, pp. 424–5. See however Richard Steele, *The Christian hero* (London, 1701), p. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 409, see also p. 89; Klein 1994, pp. 191–2.

¹⁷¹ Cited in Klein 1994, p. 78.

Again this had been central in formal or theatrical civility; not to follow the fashion was a certain way of making a fool of oneself. In this kind of civility, flattery, complaisance and affectation were closely linked with fashion – they were all parts of the gallant gentleman's important exterior. Those who were contesting this notion of civility and politeness also saw fashionable attire as an integral appurtenance of the gallant's exterior and thus closely connected with complaisance and affectation. According to Steele, flattery, affectation and fashion were sitting side by side at the foot of vanity's throne.¹⁷² Clothes, William Darrell wrote, were 'only invented as a Screen to Nakedness'; it was utterly misleading therefore to pay too much attention to them.¹⁷³ Locke agreed. Men should wear clothes 'for Modesty, Warmth, and Defence' rather than 'for this out-side fashionableness'.¹⁷⁴

There was, of course, nothing new in this scathing criticism of the following of fashion. It was a well-established theme in anti-court literature. In his adaption of Dekker's *Gul's Horn-booke*, Samuel Vincent directed his criticism against the fashionable clothes of the fop. The fop was not only said to have been born 'for his Cloaths'; 'his Soul and its Faculties' were to be found in the union of his dress and his body. Little wonder then that 'he alloweth of no Judge but the eye'.¹⁷⁵

In *The Tatler*, 'Tom Modely' is held up for ridicule for being 'one of those Fools who look upon Knowledge of the Fashion to be the only Liberal Science'.¹⁷⁶ In *The Spectator*, Addison began his discussion of the fashion by explaining why 'great masters in painting' so often represented 'an illustrious Person in a *Roman habit*' rather than in a contemporary one. The reason was simple; whereas the former was a '*Standing Dress*', the present-day fashion changes all the time, so much so that 'drawing People in the Fashion' would very quickly make them 'look monstrous'. There was not much point in trying to follow the fashion because it is, by definition, changing all the time.¹⁷⁷ By far the best dress was 'genteel, plain, and unaffected'.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² *The Spectator*, no. 460, IV, pp. 122–3. ¹⁷³ [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, pp. 37–9.

¹⁷⁴ Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 105–6.

¹⁷⁵ Vincent, *The young gallant's academy*, sigs. A3^v–4^r, pp. 73, 76, 87–8. See also G[riffin], *Essayes*, pp. 28–9. See also [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, pp. 51–8; [anon.], *The baboon a-la-mode. A satyr against the French* (London, 1704), p. 4; [anon.], *A moral essay concerning the nature and unreasonableness of pride* (London, 1689), pp. 55–6; George Etherege, *The man of mode* (1676), in *The plays*, pp. 424–7.

¹⁷⁶ *The Tatler*, no. 166, II, pp. 418–19.

¹⁷⁷ *The Spectator*, no. 129, p. 12. See also Steele, *The Theatre*, no. 16, p. 71, where 'a Man's Person and his Cloaths' are drawn into a sharp contradiction.

¹⁷⁸ *The Spectator*, no. 467, IV, p. 153. See in general Kuchta 1996. I find Kuchta's claims of a rapid and total change from an ostentatious to a simple dress in 1688–9 unconvincing.

Shaftesbury castigated those gentlemen whose imagination was ‘over-strongly with such things as frontispieces, parterres, equipages, trim-varlets in parti-coloured clothes and others in gentleman’s apparel’.¹⁷⁹ Just like human sociability in general, so the project of politeness in particular was grounded on nature rather than on human opinion and will. Shaftesbury wanted to repudiate as clearly as possible the sceptic view endorsed by many civility authors that opinion and fashion were the ultimate criteria of all human values. He described such a view condescendingly:

All is opinion. It is opinion which makes beauty and unmakes it. The graceful or ungraceful in things, the decorum and its contrary, the amiable and unamiable, vice, virtue, honour, shame, all this is founded in opinion only. Opinion is the law and measure. Nor has opinion any rules besides mere chance, which varies it as custom varies and makes now this, now that, to be thought worthy, according to the reign of fashion and the ascendant power of education.¹⁸⁰

As we have seen, the notion of formal or theatrical civility culminated in the emphasis placed on the gentleman’s exterior. The critics of this concept vehemently disagreed, arguing that civility, to be worth the gentleman’s while, must bear some relationship to his internal self.¹⁸¹ Mere external politeness without any internal content, they were arguing, was a completely misleading notion of civility. Dedicating *The Refin’d courtier* to the duke of Monmouth, Nathaniel Waker tried to make amends and pointed out that without ‘modesty and solid goodness, all external accomplishments look like mere Pageantry’.¹⁸² The presbyterian John Whitlock in his sermon to the Society for Reformation of Manners stressed the close connection between ‘Civility, and moral Honesty’.¹⁸³ According to Bellegarde, politeness consisted ‘not meerly in Surface and Exterieur, but must have its Principle in the Soul’. Although ‘many pass for *Polite* who have but a superficial tincture of this Vertue, concealing themselves under the dazzling Plumage of a borrow’d Exterieur’, even a slight acquaintance with these people would easily reveal ‘the Hypocrisy of this counterfeit *Politeness*’.¹⁸⁴

¹⁷⁹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 412. ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 328, see also pp. 386, 408–9.

¹⁸¹ See in general France 1992, pp. 64–72; Klein 1984.

¹⁸² Della Casa, *The refin’d courtier*, sig. [A6^r].

¹⁸³ John Whitlock, *A sermon preached to the Society for Reformation of Manners, at Nottingham* (London, 1699), p. 42.

¹⁸⁴ Bellegarde, *Reflexions upon the politeness of manners*, pp. 1–2, 4–6. See also [William Darrell], *The gentleman instructed*, 8th edn, p. 175; *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1731, no. 9, p. 384; Carter 2001, pp. 25–6.

When John Locke examined civility in *Some thoughts concerning education* he also wanted to distinguish between proper and mistaken civility. Of course, he was aware of the importance of 'graceful Way and Fashion'.¹⁸⁵ But the main aim of his account of civility was to emphasise the indispensability of 'inward Civility', which was the only means to avoid '*mistaken Civility*', which, needless to add, consisted of 'Flattery' and 'Dissimulation'.¹⁸⁶ If the children's 'Minds', he wrote, 'are well disposed, and principled with inward Civility, a great part of the roughness, which sticks to the out-side for want of better teaching, Time and Observation will rub off'.¹⁸⁷ Man's exterior not only bore a close relationship to his interior; the exterior carefully mirrored the mind. Being 'Well-fashion'd' meant 'that decency and gracefulness of Looks, Voice, Words, Motions, Gestures, and of all the whole outward Demeanour, which takes in Company, and makes those with whom we converse, easie and well pleased'. But, Locke went on, 'this is, as it were, the Language whereby that internal Civility of the Mind is expressed'.¹⁸⁸ Since there was thus a direct relationship between the mind and the exterior, as soon as virtues were inculcated in a child's mind, he would quickly learn outward civility.¹⁸⁹ Men were able to make 'all those little Expressions of Civility and Respect, which Nature or Custom has established in conversation, so easy to themselves, that they seem not Artificial or Studied, but naturally to flow from a sweetness of Mind, and a well turn'd Disposition'. It followed that '*Affectation* is an awkward and forced Imitation of what should be Genuine and Easie, wanting the Beauty that Accompanies what is Natural'.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, Locke agreed with Bacon that civility was exceptionally easy to learn.¹⁹¹

Pierre Nicole argued that 'there are very few civilities which ought to please us, even according to humane reason; because there are very few which are sincere and disinterested'. Civility was thus a mere means of hiding one's true feelings: 'those who in outward appearance are the most courteous and complemental, perhaps will be the first who will laugh at us when our backs are turn'd'.¹⁹² Yet Nicole also argued that when there was a close connection between our external behaviour or politeness and our internal or true sentiments civility was highly important. The obligations of civility, he remarked, were based neither on fashion and custom, nor on self-interest, as many had advocated, but rather on 'Charity' and 'Justice it self, and God's Eternal Law', which imposed 'the Devoirs of Civility'

¹⁸⁵ Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 151.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132, 150, 155.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

¹⁹² [Nicole], *Moral essays*, 1, pp. 284-6.

on men. ‘Nothing is more civil’, he wrote, ‘than a good Christian’ and ‘it follows that he must have some Divine Reasons obliging him thereunto’. The great importance of civility and politeness was not predicated on hiding one’s inner feelings. On the contrary, it was wholly contingent on the transparency of our civility – that it mirrored those inner feelings. As Nicole put it, ‘these exterior actions are due from us to those to whom we owe the dispositions they betoken; and we do them wrong when we fail therein; because this omission denotes certain sentiments which we ought not to have for them’.¹⁹³

Richard Steele went so far as to claim that the gentleman never failed to reach the ultimate aim of civility – pleasing others – if his attempt was based on ‘innate Benevolence’. But if it arose from a mere ‘Vanity to excell’ his ‘Disappointment is no less certain’. According to this analysis, the difference between true and wrong civility was just one between the ‘natural Bent’ of ‘an agreeable Man’ on the one hand, and ‘the Affectation’ of ‘a Fop’, on the other.¹⁹⁴ Once again Shaftesbury’s redefinition of politeness contained a similar criticism of purely external civility. He was convinced that there was a close link between ‘inward characters and features’ and ‘outward person, behaviour and action’.¹⁹⁵ But many a gentleman singularly forgot this; ‘the elegance of his fancy in outward things may have made him overlook the worth of inward character and proportion’.¹⁹⁶

Conversation had always had a central place in civility. The crucial importance of civil conversation – of pleasing other people when conversing with them – was almost universally emphasised. In many ways civil or polite conversation was the epitome of the whole culture of politeness. Again, however, the idea of civil conversation was far from straightforward. Some argued, as we have seen, that its defining character was pleasure and that therefore the content of the conversation was by and large negligible – or even more strongly that civil conversation was purely formal conversation and that just like civility its defining character was its exterior. But many contested this notion. Of course, they argued that a conversation, in order to be civil, had to be conducted in a polite manner; but they emphasised no less strongly that there had to be a real substance as well as a polite exterior in a civil conversation.

Many reiterated that the true character of conversation consisted both of a polite exterior and a propositional content. In Samuel Crossman’s

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 234, 237–8, 239.

¹⁹⁴ *The Spectator*, no. 280, II, pp. 590–1.

¹⁹⁵ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 150.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 412, see also pp. 414–15.

The young mans monitor (1664) there were two chapters on 'civil conversation'. He who could conduct pleasing civil conversation could be called 'a true *Citizen* and *Denizen* amongst mankind, *made free*, and meet for converse with a civill world'. But civil conversation must not be just 'for ostentation and complements, but for real mutual accommodation'. According to Crossman, a civil conversation 'cordially honours and affects a publike and common good'.¹⁹⁷ William Freke, in his long essay 'Of censure', declared that it was totally useless to have 'Alamode and Agreeable' conversations of 'Sir *Courtly Nice*'.¹⁹⁸ John Locke also insisted that 'tis not the Modes of Civility alone, that are imprinted by *Conversation*: The tincture of Company sinks deeper than the out-side'.¹⁹⁹ In a proper conversation men must be allowed to contradict each other, although in a civil fashion. Locke wanted to distance himself as clearly as possible from the view that 'there should be no Difference of Opinions in Conversation, nor Opposition in Mens Discourses'. Such an approach 'would be to take away the greatest Advantage of Society'.²⁰⁰ Conversation must not be purely formal without a content where the truth, if disagreeable, was camouflaged.

The Jesuit William Darrell agreed, defining the civil conversation of fops succinctly: 'their *yeas* go for *no's*'.²⁰¹ In *The conversation of gentlemen* (1738) John Constable, another Jesuit, extolled Darrell's account, adding that 'it is of great Moment to Agreeableness of Conversation, not only for every Man to be *well with himself* but also to *be himself*'. It was of the utmost importance to know the polite way of 'contradicting without *displeasing*'.²⁰²

When Pierre Nicole studied civility he paid careful attention to conversation. Expressing one's own sentiments created a serious problem, which was at its most pressing when we disagreed with our interlocutors. As Nicole put it, 'often we disgust not others so much by our contrary opinions, as by the fierce, presumptuous, passionate, disdainful, and insulting way of proposing them'. A satisfactory solution to this problem was to be sought from finding a civil way to contradict. 'We should learn therefore', Nicole argued, 'to contradict civilly'.²⁰³ The aim should be not so much to please, because this could bring in other inconveniences such as servitude, but rather not to displease others.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁷ Crossman, *The young mans monitor*, pp. 58–9, 76–7. See also Butler, *Characters*, pp. 167–8, 291–2; B. B., *The young gentlemen way to honour*, pp. 60–1.

¹⁹⁸ Freke, *Select essays*, p. 186.

¹⁹⁹ Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 206–7.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 205, 203.

²⁰¹ [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, p. 44. See also e.g. [anon.], *A moral essay*, pp. 55–6.

²⁰² [Constable], *The conversation of gentlemen*, pp. iii, 3–5, 29, see also pp. 20–1, 24–6, 28–30, 33–4, 186–8.

²⁰³ [Nicole], *Moral essays*, I, pp. 211–12.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 227.

In Laurent Bordelon's *The management of the tongue*, published in English in 1706, a strong urge to please one's conversants was closely linked with expressing one's own sentiments. Those who 'open their Hearts, and declare their Mind' continued 'that sweet and agreeable Commerce' of conversation.²⁰⁵ Saint-Evremond's view was very similar. In conversation, 'the Mind communicates its Thoughts, and the Heart expresses its Inclinations'.²⁰⁶

A chief concern in both *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was to reveal the hollowness of empty civil conversation and to uphold its opposite, a proper conversation dominated by simplicity, yet conducted in a polite manner. *The Tatler* announced that 'the graceful Manner, the apt Gesture, and the assumed Concern, are impotent Helps to Persuasion, in Comparison of the honest Countenance of him who utters what he really means'.²⁰⁷ When the paper exposed 'the Affectation of Politeness', its chief concern was with the modish language of empty pomposity. 'All the new affected Modes of Speech' in general and those of the 'Men of the Court' in particular would soon perish and 'appear perfectly ridiculous'.²⁰⁸ In a proper conversation the interlocutors were supposed to be disagreeing and sometimes even contradicting each other, albeit in a polite and civil manner.²⁰⁹ According to *The Spectator*, the sad consequence of the new 'excessive way of speaking Civilities' was that words had lost their meanings. 'The World is grown so full of Dissimulation and Compliment, that Mens Words are hardly any Signification of their Thoughts.' Words, in short, were made 'to signify nothing'. Empty courtesies had replaced traditional 'Plainness and Sincerity', and a man's work was no longer measured by 'his Heart'.²¹⁰

Perhaps the strongest argument against purely theatrical civil conversation was presented by Shaftesbury. He maintained that as long as they were 'politely managed' genuine conversations or 'philosophical speculations', as he called them, could 'never surely render mankind more unsociable or uncivilized'.²¹¹ But he argued even more strongly that only a genuine conversation where there was room for argument was really pleasing. 'A freedom of raillery', Shaftesbury urged, 'a liberty in decent

²⁰⁵ [Bordelon], *The management of the tongue*, pp. 1–5, 9, 68–9.

²⁰⁶ Saint-Evremond, *The works*, I, p. 310; Saint-Evremond, *Miscellaneous essays*, II, pp. 106–8.

²⁰⁷ *The Tatler*, the dedication of the third volume to Lord Cowper, I, p. 11.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 230, III, pp. 190–5. ²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 244, III, p. 250.

²¹⁰ *The Spectator*, no. 103, I, pp. 429–32; no. 557, IV, p. 503. This of course contradicted the historical account of the development of civility, put forward only a month later in *The Spectator*, see above, p. 230. See also Carter 2001, pp. 62–4; Copley 1995, pp. 68–70.

²¹¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 45, see also pp. 106–7; Klein 1994, pp. 96–101.

language to question everything, and an allowance of unravelling or refuting any argument without offence to the arguer, are the only terms which can render such speculative conversations any way agreeable.' It was the argumentative character of a conversation which also rendered it pleasing. Conversely, artificial civil conversations, governed as they were 'by the strictness of the laws prescribed to them and by the prevailing pedantry and bigotry', were nothing less than 'burdensome'.²¹² The only way to 'search and study of the highest politeness in modern conversation' was to 'delight in the open and free commerce of the world' and 'to gather views and receive light from every quarter'.²¹³

Shaftesbury was of course aware that not all shared this view. The danger, he acknowledged, that 'rational discourses' – genuine conversations – become formal, lose 'their credit' and suffer 'disgrace' was looming large. The solution was not, however, to be sought from making conversations 'to run chiefly upon trifles'. Rather, the only solution was to 'make them more agreeable and familiar'. And the best way to secure this was 'to dispute' about the matters in hand. Disagreements and arguments, Shaftesbury wanted his readers to believe, 'need not spoil good company or take from the ease or pleasure of a polite conversation'. On the contrary, they would enhance these very qualities. As Shaftesbury concluded, 'we shall grow better reasoners by reasoning pleasantly and at our ease'.²¹⁴ A Shaftesburian polite conversation was something akin to a classical dialogue, 'which heretofore was found the politest and best way of managing even the graver subjects'.²¹⁵

When the English endeavoured to redefine the notion of civility and politeness they almost invariably described the misleading concept of civility as inherently French. The fashionable courtier who was held up for a ridicule was almost always of French origin;²¹⁶ '*Raillerie a la mode*' was nothing but 'Frenchis'd' form of civility.²¹⁷ A satire of the French described him as 'the noisy Fop' whom had infected England with his inverted civility. Absurd fashion as well as 'that Noble Art, That makes the Tongue to contradict the Heart', the English had learned from the French.²¹⁸

The inevitable spread of extravagant fashion – '*French Fopperies*' – was the main argument which Addison presented against the peace with

²¹² Ibid., p. 33. ²¹³ Ibid., p. 405. ²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 233. ²¹⁶ See e.g. G[riffin], *Essays*, p. 28.

²¹⁷ [Anon.], *Raillerie a la mode consider'd*, preface, pp. 3, 6; Freke, *Select essays*, p. 186.

²¹⁸ [Anon.], *The baboon*, pp. 1, 4, 11. See also [Boyer], *The English Theophrastus*, p. 52; [Defoe], *The complete English tradesman in familiar letters*, 1, p. 319; *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731, no. 9, p. 384; [Constable], *The conversation of gentlemen*, p. 97.

France in 1711.²¹⁹ But *The Spectator* also laid all the fault for the new ‘excessive way of speaking Civilities’ at the door of those who servilely imitated French manners. It was ‘the old *English* Plainness and Sincerity’ which the paper wanted to see restored.²²⁰ Once again Shaftesbury made no exception. He, of course, confessed that the French ‘with truer pains and industry . . . have sought politeness’. But this was the artificial and vacuous politeness of flattery and complaisance.²²¹ As Klein has argued, ‘Shaftesbury’s attempt to dissociate politeness from the Court was a discursive move against the cultural hegemony of France.’²²²

The sharp dichotomy between the two different notions of civility was perhaps most glaring in their ultimate aims. All civility writers of course agreed that the general aim was to please other people, but after this relatively vague end there was a marked disagreement about the end civility was said to serve. For many theorists, as we have seen, the ultimate end of civility was simply to offer as favourable a picture of oneself as possible and thus to gain the esteem of other people. Civility was thus said to promote the pursuit of private good and interest rather than the public one. But amongst those authors we have been considering in this chapter such a conclusion was vehemently repudiated. While the notion of pleasing other people was retained, it was often said that the ultimate aim of civility was nothing less than serving the public good.

Obadiah Walker’s discussion of civility in his popular educational treatise is highly pertinent in this respect. He argued that there was something radically wrong with the prevailing notion of civility. ‘Civility’, he wrote,

is not, therefore, *punctuality of behaviour*: I mean that which consists in certain modish and particular ceremonies and fashions, in clothes, gesture, mien, speech, or the like; is not using such discourses, words, phrases, studies, opinions, games, &c. as are in fashion in the Court; with Gallants, Ladies, &c. This is a constrain’d *formality*, not *civility*; a complying with the times, not with persons; and varieth with the age or season frequently, according to the fancy of mechanick persons, in their several professions: whereas the rules of *Civility*, founded upon Prudence and Charity, are to perpetuity unchangeable.

True civility, in short, proceeded from nothing but ‘*sincerity* and virtue’.²²³

The choice between these competing civilities, Walker believed, depended on the aim we set for ourselves. If the gentleman directed

²¹⁹ *The Spectator* no. 45, I, pp. 191–2. ²²⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 103, I, pp. 429–32; no. 557, IV, p. 503.

²²¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 98, 89–90.

²²² Klein 1994, pp. 189, see in general pp. 188–92; Klein 1999, pp. xvii–xviii.

²²³ [Walker], *Of education*, pt II, p. 212.

'his *intentions* aright' all his '*actions*' would become '*virtues*'. Walker rejected first of all the idea that we should exercise civility in order to 'be acceptable to great persons'. More importantly, he also jettisoned the more general notion that the aim of civility, which mostly concerned after all equals, was to please those with whom we conversed. 'To carry himself decently, tell him,' he advised tutors of young gentlemen, 'not that the people will think better of him, *that* he shall be more accepted in conversation; but tell him *that* he ought to carry himself as the noblest and worthiest of Gods creatures.' It was entirely misleading to think that the culture of civility was just about courtesy and pleasing. On the contrary, 'tis generosity not to admire every thing he hears or sees (which some miscall civility) but to use his judgement; to discommend as well as praise; nor to acquiesce in every answer, but to seek for solid reason'.²²⁴

Furthermore, Walker emphasised that civility fell to the area of '*Active life*'. This became for Walker the chief way in which civility could be justified, because virtue needed its help. If men merely relied on '*Justice* and *severe virtue*' they would almost certainly face ruin. The only way to succeed in active life was to combine our virtuous characters with those of '*compliance* and *civility*'. The exercise of active life was predicated on society and social life, where the rules of '*Civility*' were necessary: 'to let or insinuate himself into their good liking, and voluntary assistance'.²²⁵ Civility was there to help people in their pursuits of the active life.

In *The Tatler* we find even a more vigorous defence of the idea that the pursuit of politeness and that of the active life had much in common. It was misleading to think, the paper announced, that 'what I write, is designed rather to amuse and entertain, than convince and instruct'. The aim was rather 'an useful Life', and everyone should aim at being 'laudably employed in the Improvement of their own Minds'.²²⁶ 'The Duties of Civil Life' must not be made laughing-stocks.²²⁷ Developing one's mind should thus have the ulterior motive of the *vita activa*. 'There is nothing [that] gives a Man greater Satisfaction', *The Tatler* declared, 'than the Sense of having dispatched a great deal of Business, especially when it turns to the Publick Emolument'.²²⁸ The indisputable authority of Cicero was several times invoked.²²⁹ The enhancement of the public

²²⁴ Ibid., pt I, pp. 43–5. ²²⁵ Ibid., pt II, pp. 209–11.

²²⁶ *The Tatler*, no. 96, II, pp. 94–5. See Klein 1984, pp. 197–200; Klein 1993a; Copley 1995, pp. 72–3.

²²⁷ Ibid., no. 122, II, p. 221. ²²⁸ Ibid., no. 103, II, p. 130.

²²⁹ Ibid., no. 123, II, p. 225; no. 122, II, pp. 221–2; no. 125, II, pp. 234–5.

good played a central role in the whole paper, which was directed, as the first issue pointed out, to the ‘publick-spirited’.²³⁰

It was an important part of Addison and Steele’s project to attempt to bridge the gap between civil conversation and civility on the one hand and rhetoric and civic life on the other. A man who was ‘Agreeable in Conversation’ could also be ‘Eloquent in Assemblies’ and thus ‘Dextrous in all Manner of Publick Negotiations’.²³¹ Addison and Steele were clearly aware that they were facing an uphill struggle. In so far as the progress of civility and politeness was concerned, they, of course, could feel fairly complacent; the development of civility had been steady and its actual level in their own times, they believed, was high. But their view of the state of active citizenship was much gloomier. It was obvious that there was a ‘universal Degeneracy from the Publick Spirit, which ought to be the first and principal Motive of all their Actions’. ‘Negligence of the Publick’ had already reached the level of ‘an Epidemick Vice’. Things had been far otherwise in ancient Greece and Rome where it had been impossible to be ‘in the Fashion without being a Patriot’.²³²

Addison and Steele wanted to dispel any suggestion that politeness and the active life had perhaps inherently contrary natures. There was, they insisted, a close connection between civic life and true politeness as attested by the example of ancient Athens. In Athens the time when its inhabitants had been ‘the most polite’ had coincided with the time when they had been ‘the most powerful’. It had also been the same time when ‘the Spirit of Virtue’ had been most vigorous amongst the Athenians.²³³ But Addison and Steele had to acknowledge that the project of keeping politeness and civic life closely together was ‘almost impracticable’. This project was most seriously compounded by the prevalence of misleading ideas of civility and politeness. It was, Addison and Steele argued, an integral part of the corruption which kept men away from the pursuit of the common good that they were more interested in the intricacies of civility and politeness than the active life. Accordingly, ‘the World is infatuated with the Love of Appearances instead of Things’, with the obvious consequence that a man’s chief preoccupation was ‘to gain the good Opinion of all he converses with’.²³⁴

Whereas ‘the *Temple of Virtue*’ and ‘the *Temple of Honour*’ represented the values of civic life, ‘the *Temple of Vanity*’ stood for the opposite values of theatrical politeness. The whole aim of the goddess of vanity was

²³⁰ Ibid., no. 1, 1, p. 15. ²³¹ Ibid., no. 4, 1, p. 44; no. 186, III, p. 10.

²³² Ibid., no. 183, II, pp. 491–5. ²³³ Ibid., no. 122, II, p. 222.

²³⁴ Ibid., no. 186, III, pp. 10–11.

to give as favourable picture of her exterior as possible – ‘to show her self more beautiful and majestick than she really was’ through various means of hypocrisy.²³⁵ It comes as no surprise therefore that, if Cicero was singled out as a man of true politeness and impeccable civic virtue, the counter-example was provided by ‘our modern *French* Authors, or those of our own Country who are the Imitators and Admirers of that trifling Nation’.²³⁶

Shaftesbury’s concerted effort to redefine politeness should also be seen in this larger context. According to his analysis, there had been a recent portentous progress of ‘a more deliberate selfishness’, which had resulted in virtues such as ‘civility, hospitality, humanity’ becoming dominated by ‘self-love’.²³⁷ Yet, Shaftesbury endeavoured to redirect this development. ‘Selfishness’, he argued in short, was ‘the opposite of sociableness’.²³⁸ Underlying the growth of selfishness had been the moral decay caused by the concomitant rise of luxury. Shaftesbury was convinced that he was witnessing ‘the enormous growth of luxury’ which prompted staggering ‘improvements . . . in vice of every kind where numbers of men are maintained in lazy opulence and wanton plenty’. This moral corruption, which was most conspicuous ‘in courts and palaces and in the rich foundations of easy and pampered priests’, resulted in ‘a thorough neglect of all duty or employment, a settled idleness, supineness and inactivity’.²³⁹

Shaftesbury formulated his own theory of politeness in order to counter such developments. Politeness and ethics, or manners and morality, should not be separate but must merge with one another. Shaftesbury wanted ‘to recommend morals on the same foot with what in a lower sense is called manners and to advance philosophy, as harsh a subject as it may appear, on the very foundation of what is called agreeable and polite’.²⁴⁰ His sociability was thus ‘ethical sociability’, as Klein has put it. The virtuous active life was closely associated with politeness.²⁴¹ Philosophy worth one’s while must teach ‘Action & Capacity, how to be useful in the World, a good Patriot’.²⁴² The aim was thus nothing less than the inculcation of the promotion of the public good by a virtuous civic action in the polite world. ‘In a civil state or public’, Shaftesbury

²³⁵ Ibid., no. 123, II, pp. 225–6.

²³⁶ Ibid., no. 108, II, p. 156. For the impact of Addison and Steele see e.g. Costeker, *The fine gentleman*, pp. 10, 12, 15–17; Daniel Defoe, *The compleat English gentleman* (1728?), ed. Karl D. Bülbring (London, 1890), p. 176; [Concanen], *The speculatist*, p. 74.

²³⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 55, see also pp. 65, 184. ²³⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 214. ²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 408. ²⁴¹ Klein 1994, pp. 57–8, 52, 83.

²⁴² Cited *ibid.*, p. 108.

once wrote, ‘we see that a virtuous administration and an equal and just distribution of rewards and punishments is of the highest service, not only by restraining the vicious and forcing them to act usefully to society, but by making virtue to be apparently the interest of everyone.’²⁴³

Shaftesbury coupled his account of civil life and politeness with a comprehensive analysis of liberty. This analysis runs through his writings and together with his account of politeness forms their central theme. Shaftesbury was convinced not only that civic life entailed liberty but also that his entire programme of politeness could only materialise ‘in a free nation’.²⁴⁴ ‘Want of liberty’, he declared, ‘may account for want of a true politeness and for the corruption or wrong use of pleasantry and humour.’²⁴⁵ Whereas a stringent court context only produced vacuous, theatrical politeness, which only seemed to please, liberty made a sincere politeness possible by allowing men to be natural and express their genuine opinions in a polite manner and thus to create authentic sociability. As Shaftesbury famously put it: ‘All politeness is owing to liberty. We polish one another and rub off our corners and rough sides by a sort of amicable collision.’²⁴⁶

ANTI-DUELING ARGUMENTS AND THE DEFINITIONS OF CIVILITY

In his attempt to find an efficient means to discredit the ideological basis of duelling, John Cockburn wrote: ‘There are Two Ways of attacking Customs, the First is by grave serious Reasoning; the other is that of Wit and Satyr, which very often is the most prevailing.’ His own treatise was one based on rational argument but Cockburn hoped that ‘some who had the Talent of Wit and Railery, would also essay the other’, because duelling offered ‘abundant Matter, and a very proper Occasion for it’. ‘For nothing’, he went on, ‘is more inconsiderate, foolish and ridiculous, than *Duelling*.’²⁴⁷

In the early seventeenth century many critics had poked fun at duelling and in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century many followed suit. Richard Allestree called duelling ‘this Lunacie’ and wrote that the point of honour has ‘introduced such a multitude of ridiculous

²⁴³ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 186, 210, 200, 204–5, 213–14, 224, 226. ²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5, see also pp. 112, 83, 397; Klein 1994, pp. 131–52, 207; Klein 1989.

²⁴⁶ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 31.

²⁴⁷ Cockburn, *The history*, p. v. Cf. [John Dunton], *The Athenian oracle: being an entire collection of all the valuable questions and answers in the old Athenian mercuries*, 2nd edn (3 vols., London, 1704), 1, p. 541.

Punctilio's that the next Age will be in danger receiving the Fable of *Don Quixot* for Authentick Historie'.²⁴⁸ Some critics argued that duelling was the most 'absurd' custom – 'a Custom so impertinent and Senseless, that it would very justly provoke our loudest laughter and scorne, if One could allow himself to laugh at any thing' so tragic.²⁴⁹ Francis Osborne argued that the 'wild manhood' of duelling 'had its Originall from Romances; in which the Giant is designed for death, & the Knight to marry the Lady'.²⁵⁰ Another way of lampooning duelling was to emphasise its barbaric origins. Thomas Comber wrote that duels were 'so Barbarous' that they must be 'derived from the Manners of those rude and incultivated Northern Nations'.²⁵¹ William Temple traced the origins of duelling ultimately to the barbarians of Northern Europe,²⁵² and, according to *The Tatler*, trial by combat had been invented by 'the *Laplanders*'.²⁵³

Although attempts were made to satirise duelling the critics mainly endeavoured to refute its theory by serious arguments. As we have seen, duelling was defended in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, it was still linked with the prevalent notions of civility and fashion. But it was increasingly justified by associating it with the notion of the traditional English and British gentleman and juxtaposing this to the fashionable fop. Referring to John Selden's *Duello*, reprinted in 1711, an anonymous critic pointed out in 1712 that unlike in Catholic countries, 'the English Customs never permitted themselves to be subjected to such Clergy Canons' as the prohibitions of duelling. The 'wise Speech of that pompous Antiquary', he wrote, 'would make one think, we still look'd upon Duelling as a valuable part of our Birth-right'.²⁵⁴ When many critics of duelling endeavoured to distinguish as clearly as possible between duelling and trial by combat, the aim was to question the historical arguments used to bolster the pugnacious nature of the British gentleman.

²⁴⁸ [Allestree], *The gentlemen calling*, pp. 141–2. See also I. B., *Heroick education, or choice maxims and instructions* (London, 1657), sig. I8^r.

²⁴⁹ [Anon.], *Honours preservation*, p. 12; [anon.], *The rash duellist*, pp. 12, 22–3; [anon.], *The humour of duelling*, p. 3; [Nicole], *Moral essays*, III, pp. 237–8.

²⁵⁰ [Osborne], *Advice to a son*, p. 30; Osborne, *Advice to a son. The second part*, p. 10; Osborne, *A miscellany of sundry essayes, paradoxes, and problematicall discourses, letters and characters* (London, 1659), p. 137. See also *The Tatler*, no. 251, III, p. 277; Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 264–5; [anon.], *The humour of duelling*, pp. 11–12.

²⁵¹ C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, pp. 5–10.

²⁵² William Temple, *Miscellanea in two parts*, 5th edn (London, 1697), pp. 243–4. For contemporary antiquarians' views about the trial by combat see e.g. William Dugdale, *Origines juridicales, or historical memorials*, 3rd edn (London, 1680), pp. 65–71; Madox, *The history and antiquities of the Exchequer*, I, pp. 97, 104, 372, 426, 451, 470–1.

²⁵³ *The Tatler*, no. 31, I, p. 230. ²⁵⁴ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 3.

One critic attempted to counter the duelling argument by insisting that, far from upholding them, duelling in fact undermined ‘the *English* Honour, and the *English* Rights, . . . Law and Justice, Liberty and Property, and every thing that is dear and valuable to us as Men’.²⁵⁵ Matthew Concanen wrote that some have indeed argued ‘that if *Duelling* was as entirely suppress’d in *England* as it is in *France*, it is fear’d the Insolence and Haughtiness of every Man would rise in proportion to his Power and Quality; which is a risque the middling Men, who make up the Majority of our Legislature’. But, surely, he went on, a court of honour would ‘punish the little Petulancies which are the Occasion of so much Mischief’.²⁵⁶

Nevertheless, in order to gain an understanding of the bulk of non-satirical arguments against duelling in Restoration and Augustan England, they should be interpreted in the context of the competing definitions of civility. Most of its critics singularly ignored the fact that its defenders increasingly endeavoured to associate it with the image of the English and British gentleman. Instead, they persisted doggedly in conceiving it as the very epitome of the theatrical civility of gallantry and foppery imported from France. Whereas some advocates of duelling argued that the duel was the only bulwark of British liberty against French arbitrary government, most of its critics claimed that it was, if not the very paragon of French absolutism, at the very least a social and cultural offspring of the civility which French absolutism nurtured. Nonetheless, compared with the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign, there occurred a considerable redirection in this criticism. The opponents of duelling no longer endeavoured to question the importance of civility and politeness. What they rather attempted to do was to reconstruct these notions in such a way that duelling, among other things, was no longer included in them.

The critics began by admitting that duelling was often claimed to maintain and even enhance the level of civility and politeness. In Collier’s dialogue on duelling, Philotimus, the supporter of duelling, essayed to blunt his opponents attacks by arguing: ‘let me tell you ’tis my Observation, That the Custom of Duels puts Gentlemen upon their good Behaviour’. In addition, it was ‘a check upon Conversation, and makes it more inoffensive than it would be otherwise’.²⁵⁷ In Addison and Steele’s account proneness to duelling was similarly acknowledged to be a part of a certain type of civility and education. *The Spectator* published a letter

²⁵⁵ [Anon.], *Self-murther*, p. 62.

²⁵⁶ [Concanen], *The speculatist*, p. 73.

²⁵⁷ Collier, *Essays*, p. 119.

in December 1711 in which duelling was defended because it would stop uncouth behaviour.²⁵⁸ *The Tatler* noted that to challenge 'fairly' was part of the gentleman's 'good Breeding'.²⁵⁹ The paper admitted that 'Anxiety in the Point of Reputation is the peculiar Distress of fine Spirits', which prompted them to behave extremely politely.²⁶⁰

In 1712, one critic noted that duelling was often linked with civility, so much so that without it incivility would go unchecked. Many claimed, he said, that the duel was in fact the only guarantee of civility and civil conversation:

It refines Manners, secures good Breeding, is a Check upon Rudeness and Indelicacies, purifies Conversation, and makes it more smooth and chaste, banishes from it Foulmouthedness and Scurrility, and brutish Treatment; makes Men talk under guard, while 'tis at the peril of Life, they must break in upon Decency and Civility, so brings to those Habits of Complaisance Speech and Behaviour as makes them easy to each other; keeps them from saying and doing things blunt and shocking.²⁶¹

Cockburn presented the pro-duelling claims succinctly: the duel, its defenders had claimed, was 'necessary, for curbing insolent and injurious Persons, and for preventing Affronts, abusive Language, and the like Provocations, which such Persons are ready to give if not over-awed and restrained. The Fear and Danger of a Duel serves to keep them in awe, and teaches them to use others respectfully'.²⁶²

But the ideas that duelling was part of civility and that challenges were prompted by impolite behaviour were not confined to the critics description of their opponents case; many of them also acknowledged that duels arose in situations where the boundaries of civility and politeness were breached. One of the arguments which George Mackenzie presented in favour of *otium* in *A moral essay preferring solitude to publick employment* was that the prevalent notion of conversation was extremely fallacious. Above all, in these conversations gentlemen 'did so pick one another, that it afforded then matter of eternal quarrel', leading almost inexorably to duels.²⁶³ An anti-duelling pamphlet assumed in 1680 that a duel arose when a gentleman did not keep 'within the *Rules of Civility*'.²⁶⁴ According to the nonconformist minister Henry Newcome, when men were very

²⁵⁸ *The Spectator*, no. 242, II, pp. 439–40. ²⁵⁹ *The Tatler*, no. 28, I, pp. 215–16.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 105, II, pp. 140, 143.

²⁶¹ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 45–6; [Concanen], *The speculatist*, p. 72.

²⁶² Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 246–7.

²⁶³ [George Mackenzie], *A moral essay preferring solitude to publick employment* (Edinburgh, 1665), pp. 64–5.

²⁶⁴ [Anon.], *Honours preservation*, p. 10; see also p. 12.

‘peremptory in their Assertions’ and opinions, a duel was almost bound to ensue.²⁶⁵

Nevertheless, when the critics associated duelling and civility they were keen to point out that this was not the right kind of civility. Some of them, first of all, remarked that this was the civility of beaux and fops. In the story of *The town adventurer* (1675) duelling is criticised, and it is especially strongly linked with the gallants of town. The hero of the story, Altophel, had recently come to town from the country. His attire, although ‘Valued in the Country’, was ‘a little Scandalous’ in town, ‘where they judge all things by appearance’. When his lady was walking in ‘the Mall’ with a gallant, Altophel followed them. When the gallant asked him why he was following the lady, Altophel told him that ‘he was not bound to give him an account of’ it, which, of course prompted the gallant to demand satisfaction and to send a challenge in due course. Altophel decided to accept the challenge despite the fact that he ‘followed the Dictates of that Justice and good Nature, which Custome has Discredited in the Town’. And when the actual duel was intercepted by Altophel’s mistress, his second commented that ‘she has appeared more Compassionate than many Ladies of the Town, who make a Divertisment of those Quarrels they procure’.²⁶⁶

As we have seen, Pierre Nicole distinguished strongly between two kinds of civility – a formal and outward human civility of gallants on the one hand and the ‘perfectly true’ and ‘perfectly sincere’ civility on the other. It was precisely the former which fostered duelling. When Nicole started to analyse the ‘Idea’ of ‘*Gallantry*’ the first and most important of its definitions was that ‘under this Word do we conceal the greatest crimes’; it was a gallant ‘who hath reveng’d himself, who hath kill’d his Foe in a Duel, who hath repuls’d an affront in a haughty proud manner’.²⁶⁷ For many of its critics, duelling was the epitome of the culture where appearance and exterior were of crucial importance. Whilst thus agreeing with their opponents, they, of course, found the importance of appearance extremely menacing. For many of them, duelling was the most striking example of this fallacious emphasis on the appearance; it was precisely duelling which made this entire conception of civility so abominable. Richard Allestree declared in 1660 that duelling was based on ‘the Tyrannie of Custom and Opinion’. Even worse, this custom and the fashionable ‘modern Gallantry’ imposed ‘unjust and absurd

²⁶⁵ Henry Newcome, *A plain discourse about rash and sinful anger* (London, 1693), pp. 63–4; [anon.], *An essay upon modern gallantry* (London, 1726), p. 6; Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 211–13; see also p. 206.

²⁶⁶ [Anon.], *The town adventurer*, pp. 21–2, 95–100. ²⁶⁷ [Nicole], *Moral essays*, II, pp. 275–6.

Laws' of duelling, or 'ridiculous Punctilio's' on ordinary people who felt compelled to comply with them. In *The causes of the decay of Christian piety*, Allestree compared duelling with other detestable, yet fashionable, vices, and argued that it was by far the worst consequence of following the fashion. His remedy was a plain one: men should simply avoid following the fashion of duelling and it would cease to be 'a Fashion'.²⁶⁸

Jeremy Collier thought that it was precisely duelling which demonstrated the utterly ridiculous nature of the fashion: 'What if it was the Custom to Tilt your Head against a Post, for a Morning Exercise, would you venture the beating out Brains rather than be Unfashionable?'²⁶⁹ It was one thing to comply with the fashion 'in Things indifferent'; it was quite another to claim that when justice and conscience were at stake one should still conform with the fashion and thus jettison one's conscience. Philotimus, the defender of duelling in Collier's dialogue, could grant that the total compliance to the fashion might look ridiculous but retorted that as the matters stood, 'he who refuses a *Challenge* loses the Reputation of a Gentleman: none of that Quality will keep him Company'.²⁷⁰ Whereas '*Conscience*', William Darrell noted, bade a man to stay from both drinking and the duels which frequently ensued, it was '*Civility*' which changed his mind because he feared 'to be pointed at for a *Clown*'.²⁷¹ 'Custom', he wrote, 'has ennobled Revenge: and we had better be out of the World, than out of the Fashion'.²⁷²

When John Locke examined three different forms of law – the law of god, the municipal law of government and the law of fashion – he chose duelling as his example. Duelling, he wrote, 'in relation to the Law of God, will deserve the Name Sin; to the Law of Fashion, in some Countries, Valour and Vertue; and to the municipal Laws of some Governments, a capital Crime'.²⁷³ In his chapter 'Of the fashion' La Bruyère also presented duelling as 'the triumph of the fashion'. Indeed, it was in duelling that the fashion 'exercis'd her greatest Tyranny'. The duelling theory had in fact not only been 'deeply rooted in the opinion of the World'; it had 'an intire possession of the minds of men'.²⁷⁴ By 1712 when

²⁶⁸ [Allestree], *The gentlemen calling*, pp. 140–5, 150; [Allestree], *The causes of the decay*, pp. 128–9. Cf. [anon.], *The town adventurer*, p. 98; [Walsh], *Letters and poems*, p. 10.

²⁶⁹ Collier, *Essays*, p. 105. ²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 111–15. See also C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, p. 3.

²⁷¹ Darrell, *The vanity*, pp. 19–20.

²⁷² [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, pp. 41, 42; [Dunton], *The Athenian oracle*, 1, pp. 541–2.

²⁷³ Locke, *Essay concerning human understanding*, II, xxviii, 15, p. 359.

²⁷⁴ La Bruyère, *The characters*, p. 298. See also George Villiers, second duke of Buckingham, *Buckingham: public and private man. The prose, poems and commonplace book of George Villiers, second duke of Buckingham (1628–1687)* ed. Christine Phipps. *The Renaissance Imagination*, 13 (New York, 1985), p. 183.

the anti-duelling bill had been rejected by the Commons, one dismayed author could no longer believe that a mere fashion could supersede all rational arguments. He was convinced that duelling had ‘run beyond Mode and Fashion into a kind of inherited Genius or incorrigible Habit, a second Nature’; it had simply ‘got in the *British Blood*’.²⁷⁵ But such a conviction did not command wide acceptance.²⁷⁶

In June 1709 *The Tatler* reported from White’s Chocolate-house (chocolate-houses were, of course, places where the most fashionable court gallants were expected to reside) that duelling was one of the ‘Subjects of Gallantry’ and related a story about ‘an honest Country Gentleman’ who had had ‘the Misfortune to fall into Company with Two or Three modern Men of Honour’. The country gentleman was ill treated and one of the ‘modern Men of Honour’ sent him the note saying that he ‘was ready to give him Satisfaction’. For a country gentleman, however, this was utterly ludicrous: ‘Last Night he sent me away cursedly out of Humour, and this Morning he fancies it would be a Satisfaction to be run through the Body.’²⁷⁷ According to *The Tatler*, duellists dwelt in the most polite cities and courts and they were ‘Slaves to the Fashion’, trying to be a ‘Pretty Fellow, or Man of Honour according to the Fashion’.²⁷⁸ Duelling was the epitome of the compliance to the fashion; it demonstrated in the most shocking way the complete asinity of servilely following the fashion.

A month later *The Tatler* discussed duelling during the Civil War, claiming that while there had been no duels in the parliament’s army, the king’s army had been replete with them. Inquiring into the causes of this difference, Bickerstaff reminded his readers that the king’s court had encouraged ‘Gallantry and Mode’ which were the best breeding ground for duelling. The king’s army had been full of ‘Topping Fellow[s]’ or ‘Prettie Fellow[s]’ whose defining character had been set by the latest trends and who had therefore frequently duelled.²⁷⁹

Certainly, opposing duelling was high on Addison and Steele’s agenda. But they were so vehement against it precisely because it was the worst example of the kind of ‘smart Civilities’ of the court society which they were opposing and which they tried to replace by their own notion of gentlemanly civility and politeness.

In *The Spectator* duelling was also depicted as unlawful yet highly fashionable.²⁸⁰ Famous duelling places were said to be ‘fashionable

²⁷⁵ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 2–3.

²⁷⁶ [Anon.], *The humour of duelling*, pp. 6–7, 9, 10, 12; [anon.], *Self-murther*, pp. 58, 64.

²⁷⁷ *The Tatler*, no. 25, 1, pp. 192–3. ²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 29, 1, pp. 217–19.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 39, 1, pp. 282–7; no. 44, 1, pp. 317, 323. ²⁸⁰ *The Spectator*, no. 84, 1, p. 359.

Place[s]', which were 'fit for a Gentleman to dye in'. Indeed, duelling had 'firmly fixed in the Opinion of the World as great and laudable'. But if duelling concerned only appearances and was merely a fashion, it must be easy to abolish it as well. The only thing which had to be done was to change the fashion. 'Turning the Mode another way', Steele wrote, 'would effectually put a Stop to what had Being only as a Mode.'²⁸¹ In Steele's *The Theatre*, Sir John Edgar coupled duelling with 'Fopperies' and 'Gallantries', and called it not only 'the prevailing Custom' but also 'so fashionable a Crime'; men were sacrificing their lives 'to keep themselves in Countenance and Fashion'. The only 'effectual Method of eradicating ths Evil' was therefore to bring about a drastic change in the prevailing system of values and make duelling 'as shameful as the basest Felony'.²⁸²

The critics who condemned duelling as part of a fallacious notion of civility also questioned the closely related custom of fencing, which some saw, as we have seen, as an important part of civility. Thomas Comber criticised fencing, as did *The Tatler*.²⁸³ In Samuel Butler's characterisation, the fencing-master taught 'the discipline of duels' as well as 'the theory of killing, wounding, and running through, and with the privilege of a Doctor professes murder and sudden death'.²⁸⁴ What made this all so abominable, another critic of duelling emphasised, was that fencing schools were fashionable places, thus giving even further distinction and status for duelling. They were like 'Academies', teaching 'a kind of practick Philosophy, and reasonable Culture'. The result of this was therefore that to send or to accept a challenge was 'thought by some as necessary towards a fine Gentleman'.²⁸⁵ But any attempt to condemn fencing was doomed to fail as long as the underlying notion of civility in its entirety was not questioned. Fencing was merely giving further status to duelling, but its real backbone was the ludicrous argument that it was 'a piece of sublime Behaviour' and 'an Exaltation of their Nature beyond the common Level, Humanity heighthened above the vulgar pitch'; 'an Ornament, and Accomplishment, and what not'. Duelling was portrayed by its supporters as 'an Argument of a nice Taste, and Sense of Things, the Stamp of refined Education' – to which its close connection with fencing merely gave added strength.²⁸⁶

²⁸¹ Ibid., no. 91, I, pp. 387–8; no. 97, I, p. 410.

²⁸² *The Theatre*, no. 19 (5 March 1720), p. 83; no. 26 (29 March 1720), pp. 111–12.

²⁸³ C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, p. 49; *The Tatler*, no. 26, I, p. 204; no. 105, II, p. 140; no. 173, II, pp. 447–51.

²⁸⁴ Butler, *Characters*, pp. 272–3.

²⁸⁵ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 38; [anon.], *Self-murther*, p. 68.

²⁸⁶ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 37.

Duelling was thus heavily criticised for complying with prevailing customs and fashions. But, as the critics were quick to point out, the crux of the problem was not so much that duelling happened to be fashionable, otherwise they could merely wait for a while until the fashion changed. The problem was rather that duelling, just like complying with current fashion in general, lay at the heart of the misleading notion of theatrical civility. This notion of civility placed all the emphasis on the appearance. What made the duelling theory particularly detestable to its opponents was that it demanded men to put their peers' opinion about their appearance before everything else. The critics of duelling wholeheartedly agreed with their opponents that it was exactly the maintenance of this external appearance which was at stake in a duel. Whereas *The Spectator* exclaimed that 'it often happened that a Duel was fought (to save Appearances to the World)',²⁸⁷ another anti-duelling writer noted that the duellists 'fight in Masquerade, and appear to be what they are not'.²⁸⁸ As many critics thoroughly understood, the area where the theory of duelling and the concomitant concept of civility met was the underlying notion of honour. It was the completely fallacious concept of honour which was central in the misleading notion of civility as much as in the duelling theory.²⁸⁹

As we have seen, one of the central arguments against duelling during the Jacobean anti-duelling campaign was that the notion of honour inherent in the duelling theory was completely askew. Duelling was based on a horizontal view of honour, but the critics had argued that, while there might be certain horizontal aspects in honour, the only right kind of honour was ultimately vertical in character. The opponents of duelling in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries continued and developed this criticism. George Mackenzie was not alone when he wrote in 1667 that the world was becoming old because 'in this twilight of it's declining age, it too frequently mistakes the colours of good and evil'. By far the most dangerous of these confusions and errors were those which concerned 'Honour'.²⁹⁰ Another critic drew the distinction between 'the *reality* and the *resemblance*' of honour.²⁹¹ Daniel Defoe argued in 1704 that duels were fought over the 'mistaken Point of Honour'.²⁹² In 1712, one writer declared that 'the Notion of Honour is certainly very corrupt'; it was in fact 'more in fault than our Duelling, which is chiefly occasion'd

²⁸⁷ *The Spectator*, no. 97, I, p. 410. ²⁸⁸ [Anon.], *Self-murder*, p. 65.

²⁸⁹ For exceptions see Chishull, *Against duelling*, pp. 6–9; [anon.], *Honours preservation*, p. 6.

²⁹⁰ George Mackenzie, *Moral gallantry* (1667) (London, 1669), pp. 2–3.

²⁹¹ [Anon.], *The rash duellist*, p. 2.

²⁹² Defoe, *A review of the affairs of France* no. 16 (29 April 1704), p. 77.

thro' its falshood'. Little wonder that he felt the urgent need to reform the concept.²⁹³

Just like the concomitant idea of civility, the concept of honour was said to be misleading precisely because it was only its shadow or appearance rather than true honour itself. 'The great Mistake which creates all this Mischief' of duelling, wrote Thomas Comber, 'is the common Error concerning the Notion of *Honour*.' The duellists embraced 'Imaginary and Fantastic' honour, but true honour was 'solid and substantial'.²⁹⁴ Whereas imaginary honour was only external and more often than not mere illusion, true honour, being solid and substantial, yielded a true picture of a man's genuine qualities. John Adams talked about 'an Inward' and outward 'Principle' of honour. Just as in the case of civility, so in this dichotomy of honour the appearance must bear a close relationship to the internal or otherwise it was seen as completely fallacious. Adams emphasised that 'the outward honour . . . is the Image of inward Honour'.²⁹⁵

This is even more strongly argued in Courtin's 'A short treatise of the true point of honour' appended to the 1703 edition of the *Rules of civility*. First, 'the *Point of Honour*' was often thought to be reflexive, as something which was 'most sensible and tender'.²⁹⁶ But the word 'point' also meant 'the minutest Part of divisible things'. Taken in this sense, to fight for the point of honour meant fighting for the most negligible reason. 'The *Point of Honour*', Courtin concluded, 'is properly, not a *Rule* prescrib'd by *Honour*, but a *Punctilio of Ceremony*, with Respect to such vain and proud People, and the *Swelling of Self-Love*'.²⁹⁷ Thus the point of honour had nothing to do with true honour. Whereas true honour was 'the *outward* Manifestation' of 'the inward Man', false honour proceeded from a mere 'Illusion'.²⁹⁸ The poet and essayist James Arbuckle was convinced that 'a great part of Mankind' erred 'in their Notions of Honour' when they were ready to issue a challenge to a man who 'should but presume to look him in the face, with a Cock of Defiance in his Hat', or who 'durst deny him the Title of *Right Honourable*'. Who were prone to behave in this ridiculous manner? Everyone, Arbuckle insisted, who fancied 'the Reputation of a *Gallant Peer*, and a Man of *strictest Honour*'; everyone who wanted to be 'Lord *Modish*' or 'Squire *Fopling*'.²⁹⁹

²⁹³ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 43–4.

²⁹⁴ C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, p. 47.

²⁹⁵ John Adams, *An essay concerning self-murder* (London, 1700), pp. 226–8. See also I. B., *Heroick education*, sigs. I7^v–I8^r.

²⁹⁶ Courtin, *The rules of civility* (1703), pp. 232–4.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 235–6. ²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 229–31.

²⁹⁹ James Arbuckle, *A collection of letters on several subjects, lately publish'd in The Dublin Journal* (2 vols., London, 1729), II, pp. 2–3.

The opponents of duelling readily accepted the pivotal importance of honour in a gentleman's life, but denied that the prevailing conception of honour was the true one. 'A Man without Honour', the Jesuit William Darrell wrote, 'is dead to all the Offices of Society and Commerce.'³⁰⁰ Yet true honour was based on conscience, not on 'the false but prevailing Maxims of Custom and Opinion'.³⁰¹ Pierre Nicole also insisted that honour and glory were extremely important, but immediately went on to contrast 'Humane Glory' to 'the Glory of Saints'. Human glory was merely based on 'the good opinion of others'. He who was interested in it and who was willing to fight a duel Nicole called a 'gallant Man'.³⁰² In 1712, an anonymous critic contrasted 'true Honour' with a 'bulky Phantom' and 'An *Italian* Shadow'. This mistaken concept of honour was but a shadow 'with Mouth widen'd with formal Grin of subdolous Civility'. Underlying duelling was thus 'an airy Notion of a chimerical and imaginary Being, that does not really exist'.³⁰³

John Cockburn also deemed that, 'if true Honour oblige Men to Duels, they are justifiable by Nature, Reason and Religion'. But of course it did not, because there was the crucial distinction between 'true' and 'counterfeit' honour. Just like many other critics, Cockburn stressed that 'true Honour is neither imaginary nor arbitrary; it depends not upon uncertain and variable Opinion'. So whereas false honour was merely illusory without any real basis, true honour had 'a fix'd and real Foundation'.³⁰⁴

Underlying the dichotomy of true and false honour was the familiar distinction between vertical honour based on virtues and reputation or horizontal honour depending on other men's opinions. Of course, some critics emphasised, as Edward Waterhouse did in 1665, that 'Religion and Piety is the truest Point of Honour'.³⁰⁵ But by far the most common way of defining true honour was to argue that it was based on nothing but virtues and virtuous actions. This argument underpinned George Mackenzie's *Moral gallantry*, Walker's *Of education*, Comber's *Discourse of duels* as well

³⁰⁰ [Darrell], *A gentleman instructed*, p. 113. ³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, sigs. A9^v–10^r.

³⁰² [Nicole], *Moral essays*, II, pp. 288–90, I, p. 52.

³⁰³ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 39–43. See also Holbrook, *Christian essays*, pp. 36–7; [anon.], *The humour of duelling*, pp. 9, 11–12.

³⁰⁴ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 146–62. For later examples see *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1731, no. ix, pp. 384–5; [John Hildrop], *An essay on honour, in several letters, lately published in the miscellany* (London, 1741), pp. 15–18; [anon.], *A letter to the gentlemen of the army* (London, 1757), pp. 1–3, see also p. 17.

³⁰⁵ Edward Waterhouse, *The gentlemen's monitor* (London, 1665), p. 314. See also e.g. Collier, *Essays*, p. 122; Nathanael Vincent, *The right notion of honour: as it was delivered in a sermon before the king at Newmarket, Octob. 4. 1674* (London, 1685), p. 6; [anon.], *Self-murther*, p. 72.

as most of the anti-duelling writings.³⁰⁶ Jacques Abbadie maintained that God had given men 'the Love of Esteem' for 'the Preservation of the *Body*, the Good of *Society*, and the Exercise of *Virtue*'. If the love of esteem became too excessive, men began to take honour as reflexive and to be too preoccupied by 'outward Contempt or Disrespect' and be prone to duelling.³⁰⁷ True honour, one critic defined, was thus 'only another name for good and virtuous Principle, together with its Causes and Effects'.³⁰⁸

Whereas true honour and true civility emphasised a gentleman's genuine virtues and values, in striking contrast the misleading ideas of honour and civility stressed the exterior and thus other people's opinions rather than one's own genuine characteristics. According to Jonathan Swift, 'a Man of Honour, as that Word is usually understood' did not think that he was obliged 'to be chaste or temperate; to pay his Creditors; to be useful to his Country'. His honour did not depend on virtues but rather 'upon the Breath, the Opinion, or the Fancy of the People'.³⁰⁹ Many censors of duelling agreed, pointing out that the duellist's notion of honour was based on mere opinion. To make matters worse, the duellist's notion was also the popular or vulgar opinion. According to Clement Ellis, the duellist's '*Honour and Reputation*' were 'no more, but the *creatures of Popular breath*'.³¹⁰ Cockburn concurred. For him, 'the Test of true honour is not Custom, nor vulgar Sentiments', which were highly 'variable'. On the contrary, things were 'honourable and base, by virtue of their intrinsick Nature'.³¹¹

Once again the account of honour and its place in gentlemanly society to be found in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* followed these well-trodden paths. *The Spectator* mentioned that 'the Love of Praise is a Passion deeply fix'd in the Mind of every extraordinary Person', and linked this with

³⁰⁶ [Walker], *Of education*, p. 54; C[omber], *A discourse of duels*, p. 47.

³⁰⁷ Jacques Abbadie, *The art of knowing one-self: or, an enquiry into the sources of morality*, transl. [anon.] (Oxford, 1695), pp. 228–9, 231–3.

³⁰⁸ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 39–40. See also Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 166–80; Adams, *An essay*, pp. 226–7; Courtin, *The rules of civility* (1703), pp. 237–8; [R. Gosling?], *The laws of honour: or, a compendious account of the ancient derivation of all titles, dignities, offices, &c.* (London, 1714), pp. i–ii; [anon.], *Honours preservation*, p. 3; [anon.], *A letter to the gentlemen*, p. 2; John Weldon, *The academy of true wisdom: or, the school of virtue* (Rotterdam, 1694), p. 315; Jean Puget La Serra, *Ethic christiana, or the school of wisdom*, transl. James Alardis (London, 1664), pp. 29–30, 70–4; Henry Hallywell, *The excellency of moral vertue, from the serious exhortation of St. Paul to the practice of it* (London, 1692), pp. 126–47.

³⁰⁹ Jonathan Swift, 'Three sermons' (1744), in *The prose works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Herbert Davis (16 vols., Oxford, 1939–74), ix, pp. 139–68, at p. 153.

³¹⁰ E[llis], *The gentle sinner*, p. 12. ³¹¹ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 156–62.

civility and politeness.³¹² Having stressed the importance of honour and reputation, Addison and Steele, like many other critics of duelling, went on to contrast internal and external honour. *The Tatler* declared that whereas ‘the Sense of other Men ought to prevail over us in Things of less Consideration’, in matters of greater importance like ‘Honour’ we must always be ‘well satisfied with our own Reflections’.³¹³ ‘Glory’ was ‘everlastin’ when its foundation was ‘Virtue and Service’. But one should never try to please ‘the Generality of Mankind’ but rather ‘the Worthy’ or ‘virtuous Men’.³¹⁴ Indeed, as Seneca had put it, ‘Glory is nothing else but the Shadow of Virtue’.³¹⁵ Just like virtuous excellence so ‘Rakish and Extravagant’ behaviour owed its existence to the desire of glory. But there was an essential difference: whether this desire led men to embellish ‘the Mind’ or to adore ‘the Outside’. Depending on one’s disposition it thus rendered ‘the Man eminently Praiseworthy or ridiculous’.³¹⁶ According to *The Tatler*, whereas proper civility was closely associated with virtues and ‘publick Spirit’, patriotism and active life, misleading civility focused on one’s private good. Thus, whereas public spirit had always prompted men to sacrifice themselves for the common good, the perverted notion of civility only prompted them to fight duels ‘upon any Occasion which he thinks may taint his own Honour’ – to maintain their private reputation.³¹⁷

Duelling was thus seen by its opponents as the epitome of the wrong kind of civility. Opposing duelling was not an isolated phenomenon but rather an important part of rejecting a certain kind of civility and thus of an attempt to redefine it. The solution to the social problem of duelling was sought not only from legislation or Christian principles but also from a wholesale change in the ideology of civility and politeness. It is highly indicative that when Jonathan Swift briefly examined duelling in his essay ‘On good-manners and good breeding’, he said, he ‘should be exceedingly sorry to find the legislature make any new laws against the practice of duelling’ – not because he favoured duelling but because legislation was not the most efficient way of solving the problem. It was

³¹² *The Spectator*, no. 467, IV, pp. 150–3; no. 262, II, pp. 518–19.

³¹³ *The Tatler*, no. 251, III, pp. 276–7. For the importance of horizontal honour see however Richard Steele, *Mr. Steele’s apology for himself and his writings; occasioned by his expulsion from the House of Commons* (London, 1714), pp. 23–4.

³¹⁴ *The Spectator*, no. 218, II, pp. 349–50; no. 188, II, pp. 238–9.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 139, II, p. 49; see also no. 255, II, pp. 490–1; no. 480, IV, p. 203; *The Tatler*, no. 123, II, p. 225; Steele, *The Theatre*, no. 4 (12 January 1720), p. 18.

³¹⁶ *The Spectator*, no. 224, II, pp. 370–4; *The Theatre*, no. 16 (23 February 1720), p. 71.

³¹⁷ *The Tatler*, no. 183, II, p. 491.

easy, Swift argued, 'for a wise man to avoid a quarrel with honour, or engage in it with innocence'. It was only if he imitated 'bullies, sharpers, and rakes' that a man was bound to fight a duel.³¹⁸ From such a perspective, anti-duelling laws appeared inefficient. The only way in which duelling could be abolished was thus to prompt gentlemen to abandon their utterly misleading notions of honour and civility and to embrace right notions in their stead.

Many anti-duelling authors seized on this line of argument. They insisted that the whole problem was a stark choice between a civility where all the weight was placed on appearance and external fashion on the one hand, and a civility where priority was given to more solid virtues on the other.

Clement Ellis's *The gentle sinner*, first published in 1660, and reprinted several times during the rest of the seventeenth century, gives us one of the most thorough and striking examples of both the attempt to redefine civility and condemn duelling as part of that redefinition. The entire work was organised in a way which emphasised the complete contrast between two different types of civility, and it is highly significant that Ellis was constantly using the word 'civility' in referring to both. The former was epitomised by 'the gentle sinner' or 'England's brave gentleman' who 'endeavours a little more to Civilize the Title, and calls himselfe in a more *pleasing* language *Gallant*'.³¹⁹ This civilising process did not stop at pleasing titles; it also included the gallant's entire life. His chief preoccupation was 'to scorne all *businessse*' and concentrate instead on 'the *Modes* and *Vices* of the times'. Thus when the gallant went to the university or the Inns of Court, he did not attempt to achieve learning but only skills which would 'enable himselfe hereafter to *talke* of the *Customes* and *Fashions*'. He always wore new clothes, so much so that those who were commonly called '*Civill* and *Ingenious* persons' had nothing 'but a little *vain* and *Glittering* Apparell'. His 'whole *life* is indeed no other then one *studied* imitation'. He was, in short, only interested in the appearance.³²⁰

His attendant notion of civility was completely misleading. As Ellis described it, 'sometimes you shall have a *Complement* from him, but puff'd up with so many *hyperbolically* expressions'. But by far the worst was the notion of affront inherent in the gallant's notion of civility. His 'intollerable *Pride* makes everything, that is not the very *basest* kind of *Flattery* passe for an Affront, and an high piece of *Disrespect* unto his *Person*'. Thus, even

³¹⁸ Swift, 'On good-manners', p. 214.

³¹⁹ E[llis], *The gentle sinner*, pp. 12–13.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 25–6, 28–31, 195.

the slightest diversion from the ‘*hyperbolicall*’ code of civility was a most serious insult, which, of course, required an immediate response. This response, Ellis pointed out, the gallant ‘has learn’d to call a necessary *vindication* of his *Honour*’.³²¹

It was inimical enough that people held to such principles. But what made it all so heinous was, of course, that these principles were claimed to be an essential part of civility. ‘And now all this *Madnesse*’, Ellis thundered, ‘must be thought no worse then the *Demonstration* of that *Civillity* and *Courtesy* which they owe one another.’ Furthermore, whoever refused ‘either to goe along with them, or to doe as they do when he is there’ was called ‘an *uncivill fellow* and no *Companion* for *Gentleman*’ and could be ‘sure to hear of it with an *Oath* now, and perhaps a *Challenge* anon’.³²²

Such a perverted notion of civility, Ellis wanted his readers to believe, wholly dominated the English elite. But he also wanted to convince them that there was an alternative understanding of civility, which he called ‘*Common Civility*’. Its defining character was that it ‘naturally obliges him to make *suitable returnes* to those many *reall kindnesses* and respects which the *best* of his *friends* have ever had for him’.³²³ Again, however, this form of civility was not circumscribed to one particular area of the gentleman’s life but regulated its entirety. His apparel and conversation were entirely appropriate and practical. His ‘Behaviour and Civility’ were dominated by two contrasting but mutual notions. On the one hand ‘his whole *Behaviour* and *Carriage* is *Masculine* and *Noble*’, revealing ‘his *Heroick* spirit’. But this was accompanied, on the other hand, ‘with a wonderfull *Humility* and *Courtesy*’. Above all his comportment and conversation, while full of kindnesses and civilities, was completely free of the tricks and flatteries, compliments and extravagancies so characteristic of the perverted notion of civility. According to Ellis,

his *Complements* are not (as in others) the wild *extravagances* of a *Luxuriant Language*, but the *naturall* breathings of a sincere *kindnesse* and *Respect*; His *Civility* is alwaies one, with his *Duety*, his *Frindship*, or his *Charity*. A *Court-dresse* cannot bring him in love with a *Lie*; nor can he look upon a *Fashionable Hypocrisy* with a more favourable eye, then upon a *Glorious cheat*; He judges of all *Dissimulation*, as in it selfe it is, for though in *Complement* the Practice of it may seem *Princely*, yet in its own *Nature* he knowes ’tis *Devillish*, and in the *Issue* will prove *Damnabale*.³²⁴

The true gentleman’s civilities were never empty courtesies; there was always a close link between his exterior and interior, between his civility

³²¹ Ibid., pp. 72, 81–2. ³²² Ibid., pp. 188–9.

³²³ Ibid., pp. 204–12, quotation p. 206. ³²⁴ Ibid., pp. 108–26.

and duty, and he thus readily embraced politeness as well as '*vertue and Goodnesse*'.³²⁵ Amongst his virtues were both magnanimity and valour. But lest he appeared as a gallant with perverted notion of civility, Ellis hastened to add that 'I mean *Christian Magnanimity*' where humility played a central role.³²⁶ Equally, he had '*true valour*', so much so that he was always ready 'to vindicate and defend' his '*Honour*' 'from all injuries and affronts' and was even 'engaged in many a *Duell*'. But again these were not duels in which the gallants would be engaged; rather they were duels to defend religion and his own soul against 'those *Heresies* and those *Sins*, which wold *stain* and *Corrupt* the *one*, or *steal* away and *deflower* the *other*'.³²⁷ Ellis was thus adamant that his true gentleman was no less magnanimous and valorous than the gallant claimed to be but only that his virtues were tempered with Christianity.

Nevertheless, the most crucial difference between a gallant and a true gentleman was that whereas the former wanted to vindicate his pretended reputation by a duel, the latter detested any such idea. It would never be worth his while to die for the trifling things of his exterior and reputation. To exercise his virtues, he must become a profitable member of the commonwealth. He should not carry 'his *fine* Body up and downe the *Streets*, as men use to doe their *Dancing-horses* in a *Fair*, onely to be *seen*, and make *sport* for the *Spectators*'; he must 'take some part of the weighty *burthen* of the *Commonwealth* upon his *back*'.³²⁸

In *Behemoth*, Hobbes took up a similar argument, though bereft of its Christian overtones. When the interlocutors of the dialogue examined the nature of wisdom they drew a distinction between a wise who 'knows how to bring his business to pass (without the assistance of knavery and ignoble shifts) by the sole strength of his good contrivance' on the one hand and 'a fool' who, though he may have been exceptionally successful, used precisely these 'ignoble shifts' like 'false dice, and packing of cards' on the other. The interlocutors agreed that the former wisdom was rare – 'there be few wise men now-a-days', and that therefore most people took this frank wisdom as mere 'folly'. Nevertheless, the fashionable wisdom of 'knavery' was not an isolated phenomenon. It was nothing less than an essential part of a trendy and rampant but utterly misleading notion of civility. For Hobbes, as for so many other critics of duelling, it was this fallacious idea of civility, which prompted men to dissimulation and fashionable clothes, which also impelled them to duelling. As Hobbes put it, 'fine clothes, great feathers, civility towards men that

³²⁵ Ibid., pp. 124–9.

³²⁶ Ibid., pp. 133–9.

³²⁷ Ibid., pp. 145–6.

³²⁸ Ibid., pp. 157–60.

will not swallow injuries, and injury towards them that will, is the present gallantry'.³²⁹

The same argument was constantly put forward during the anti-duelling campaign of the early eighteenth century. According to Cockburn, external civility, or 'an outward suitable Behaviour', must truthfully represent the internal mind – 'the inward Disposition of the Mind'. This meant that it was a choice between an objective morality based on God and nature on the one hand and a subjective one based on the fashion on the other. To argue, he wrote, that the duel was the best way of responding to insults was to 'have no Opinion of Providence'; it was indeed to 'think Morality a meer Name, Virtue and Vice arbitrary things, Justice towards God and Man to have no Foundation in Nature, and that the Obligation to them ceaseth, unless all and every one agree to the Observance of them, as if it flowed from a mutual Contract'. Objective morality was an integral part of civility and politeness; it was highly misleading, Cockburn concluded, to claim that 'Wickedness is no Wickedness when fashionable'.³³⁰

It was precisely this line of argument which also guided Shaftesbury's short but sharp rebuttal of the prevailing culture of duelling. He associated duelling with the predominant but ultimately fallacious notion of courtly politeness. He commenced his analysis by insisting that those who were ignorant of the history of politeness – 'the flux and reflux of politeness' – were 'apt at every turn to make the present age their standard, and imagine nothing barbarous or savage but what is contrary to the manners of their own time'. Such men were nothing but 'critics by fashion'. These men of 'a Court education' always set a great store by ladies. In time of 'chivalry' this had provoked 'not only of feigned combats and martial exercises but of real duels and bloody feats of arms'. Nor was 'this spirit' entirely lost in Shaftesbury's own days, and 'the fair sex inspire us still with the fancy of like gallantries'. Duels were thus not only caused by ladies; they were characteristic of court gallants; 'to give and ask that satisfaction', Shaftesbury wrote, 'is peculiar to the fine gentlemen of the age'.³³¹ 'The point of honour' was thus an essential part of 'gallantry' and a 'foppish, courtly humour'.³³²

The anonymous author of *An account of the damnable prizes* (1712) also coupled duelling and the deceptive notion of civility together. Ridiculing the

³²⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth or the Long Parliament* (1679), ed. Ferdinand Tönnies (London, 1899), p. 38.

³³⁰ Cockburn, *The history*, pp. 276–303, 247–52.

³³¹ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, pp. 122–3. ³³² *Ibid.*, p. 237, see also pp. 446–7.

same hairsplitting with words in the duelling theory as Shakespeare and Bacon had, and referring perhaps directly to *As you like it*, the anonymous author pointed out that 'tis the downright Phrase and Expression only you are to forbear, and saying this in so many Words and Syllables, for you may say, if you be an Artist, what comes to both these by Circuition, and no Harm done.'³³³ More importantly, while the threat of a duel might prevent gentlemen giving one another the lie, it surely did not stop them lying to each other. On the contrary, it allowed them to lie with impunity because it was the public accusation of lying, rather than lying itself, which occasioned the challenge. But if duelling could only deter gentlemen from accusing each other of lying but not from actual lying, if it, in fact, encouraged them to lie, the underlying notion of politeness and civil conversation was strange indeed. First, it allowed gentlemen to use exceptionally foul language – they were 'free as Air to Curse, Swear, Blaspheme, talk Baudy, and all that with great Applause'; the only thing it did not allow them to do was to give the lie. 'Thus', the author exclaimed, 'Duelling improves Conversation.' But far from actually doing so, duelling, of course, positively inhibited all real conversation. In short, duelling spoiled 'Conversation' and corrupted 'its Nature', which the author defined as 'a free Intercourse of Spirit, a secure mutual Communication of Thought'. Instead of airing their opinions, gentlemen were thus expected to offer empty politenesses. Their conversation not merely lacked any propositional content; it was also devoid of all cordial familiarities. Describing the dismal state which conversation would under such circumstances reach, the anonymous author explained that duelling:

ruins Freedom, cramps Humour, makes Discourse pass and repass, stiff and formally and with Reserves, baulks Fancy, makes Men talk of and at a distance from each other, artificially parry, and keep under close Covert and within Lines, makes them intrench themselves against each other with Dissimulation, and show nothing but a false Copy of their Countenances, they take up with some forced Phrases of feigned Familiarity, and nothing comes cordially from 'em; where your fine Gentlemen, and Men of nice Honour make part of the Society, the Word is kept close, they lie at catch for Lapses, and you are with a Set of Persons of that Character in a Room, in much the same Condition, as if you were with wild Bears ty'd with Packthread, in continual Expectation when one or other should break loose and do Mischief. It defeats the end of Conversation, makes it dangerous as a Battle, makes Murder instead of Mirth, its frequent Upshot.

³³³ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 46.

But, surely, the anonymous author asserted, this was not the true notion of politeness or civil conversation. The proper knack of conversation must rather be to say 'something without making it a Man of Honour's Duty to run you thro'.³³⁴ It must avoid 'such nice and ticklish Punctilios'. If the only options for gentlemen were 'either [to] avoid all sociable Converse with their Equals, or [to] comply with those Methods that will carry them decently thro' it', it was best to abandon the entire notion of gentility and civility altogether.³³⁵ Duelling 'had so entangled it self with civil Life, and incorporated with the Laws of Conversation, that they are not to be parted without great Distraction in the well-bred World'.³³⁶ One of the main aims of the anonymous author was therefore to distance a proper civility and civil conversation from those discourses which upheld duelling. He defined duelling as 'a very gross Irregularity' and 'a foul Breach of all Duty, proper Rule, and just Behaviour, that one may wonder' how 'a Polite Society' willingly succumbed to 'such a piece of barbarous Extravagance'.³³⁷

³³⁴ Ibid., pp. 46–7; see also p. 49. See also *The Spectator*, no. 99, 1, p. 418, where it was noted very similarly that 'one may tell another he Whores, Drinks, Blasphemes, and it may pass unresented, but to say he Lies, tho' but in Jest, is an Affront that nothing but Blood can expiate'.

³³⁵ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 49.

³³⁶ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, p. 3. A very similar view is put forward in [anon.], *Self-murder*, p. 66.

³³⁷ [Anon.], *An account of the damnable prizes*, pp. 17–18. For later examples see Holbrook, *Christian essays*, p. 34; [Hildrop], *An essay on honour*, pp. 90–1, 93–4.

Politeness, duelling and honour in Bernard Mandeville

BERNARD MANDEVILLE AND THE TRADITION
OF CIVILITY AND DUELLING

When the *Female Tatler* reached its 52nd issue on 4 November 1709, 'Mrs. Crakenthorpe, a Lady that knows every thing', gave way to 'a Society of Ladies'. The members of this society included Susannah Centlivre and Bernard Mandeville. New authors also meant new topics, and when Lucinda, Camilla, Emilia and Rosella were accompanied by Colonel Worthy in the 52nd issue, 'the Discourse fell upon Courage'. The Colonel pointed out that he had always been most careful so 'as not to give the least Shadow of an Affront to any, and so happy as to have received none yet'. Although 'it should be with the highest Regret, if ever he engag'd in a private Quarrel', he would always be ready to follow the rules of honour and to fight a duel.¹

The 52nd issue, written by Mandeville, was no mere curious incident, for duelling became a staple topic in *The Female Tatler* for the next sixty issues, and was hardly less important in Mandeville's other writings. He briefly mentioned it in *The virgin unmask'd* (1709) and examined it more thoroughly both in one of the Remarks of the first volume of *The fable of the bees*, which appeared for the first time in 1714, and in 'A search into the nature of society' also published as part of the same volume. He further mentioned it in the *Free thoughts on religion, the Church, and national happiness* in 1720 as well as in *An enquiry into the causes of the frequent executions at Tyburn* in 1725. Four years later in 1729, when he published the second volume of *The fable of the bees*, Mandeville again examined duelling and in one of his last publications, *An enquiry into the origin of honour and the usefulness of Christianity in war* (1732), he offered once again a thorough account of duelling and honour.

¹ *Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709); Goldsmith 1985, pp. 36–7.

Mandeville's account of duelling and his views of its beneficial nature were not lost on his early critics. When Richard Fiddes published *A general treatise of morality* in 1724 as a riposte to the first part of *The fable*, he included a chapter on duelling, mustering most of the staple arguments against it. Fiddes insisted not only that 'Honour can never oblige us to act in Breach of those Human Laws, to which we profess, and owe, Subjection', but also that duelling was prohibited even in the state of nature.² George Blewitt also thundered against Mandeville's esteem of duelling. Of course, 'the fear of Shame, and the Prospect of Honour' were powerful motives, but the main reason for the popularity of duelling was the fact that magistrates were not trying to prevent it. Blewitt was convinced that if the proposals of James I's proclamation and the appended treatise had been followed it would have been relatively easy to curb duelling altogether.³ In his examination of *The fable* John Thorold declared that 'to say, that those who are guilty of Duelling go by true Rules of Honour, is ridiculous'. Duelling was, in brief, a 'diabolical' practice.⁴ But if Mandeville's critics regarded his defence of duelling as worth their while, its importance to the larger debate about duelling was also soon recognised by subsequent participants in this debate. When Coustard de Massi's history of duelling appeared in English in 1770 the translator added some English material, quoting Mandeville at length. He called Mandeville 'a very ingenious English author, allowed to have been one of the most strenuous advocates that ever drew a pen in the defence of this erroneous custom'.⁵

Despite this eagerness of early commentators to seize on Mandeville's conception of duelling, most modern scholars have by and large overlooked its role in his writings. And when it has been noted, scholars have claimed that Mandeville was highly critical of duelling.⁶ Andrea Branchi alone has recently emphasised both the importance of duelling in Mandeville's philosophy and the centrality of his contribution to the early modern English debate on duelling.⁷

² Richard Fiddes, *A general treatise of morality, form'd upon the principles of natural reason only* (London, 1724), pp. 381–7.

³ [George Blewitt], *An enquiry whether a general practice of virtue tends to the wealth or poverty, benefit or disadvantage of a people?* (London, 1725), pp. 73, 75–6.

⁴ John Thorold, *A short examination of the notions advanc'd in a (late) book, intituled, The fable of the bees* (London, 1726), pp. 20–2.

⁵ Coustard de Massi, *The history of duelling*, pp. 106–16. See also Hey, *A dissertation on duelling*, pp. 93–4.

⁶ Hopkins 1975, pp. 90–1; Horne 1978, p. 49; Goldsmith 1985, pp. 151, 137.

⁷ See Branchi 1998a; Branchi 1998b to both of which I am greatly indebted. See also Frevert 1995, pp. 22–3; Jack 1987, p. 122 and n49 on p. 182.

If Mandeville's notion of duelling has mostly been overlooked his related concepts of politeness and honour have fared somewhat better. The crucial importance of such notions as pride and shame, civility and self-liking in Mandeville's writings have often been stressed. Whereas one commentator has claimed that 'Mandeville was by far the most deadly critic of this language of manners and politeness',⁸ Thomas A. Horne, E. J. Hundert and others have pointed out that for Mandeville politeness and honour were ultimately based on his concept of self-liking.⁹ Nevertheless, no thorough analysis of Mandeville's conceptions of civility and politeness in relation to the earlier traditions of these concepts has been made.¹⁰

The aim of this concluding chapter is to redress this imbalance and to examine Mandeville's conception of duelling. I argue not only that duelling is frequently mentioned and carefully analysed in Mandeville's works but also that he had a highly positive view of it. Similarly, he scrupulously studied the related concepts of politeness and honour, valour and courage and together with duelling they played central roles in his overall social theory. Most importantly, I endeavour to situate Mandeville's account of politeness, honour and duelling within the intellectual context in which they were formed. This context, I contend, is to be found in the series of debates about these concepts in early modern culture.

In Mandeville scholarship, the contextualisation of his writings has always been considered as a pivotal task. F. B. Kaye was already interested in Mandeville's intellectual background and, more recently, Horne organised his work on Mandeville according to his different intellectual settings,¹¹ while M. M. Goldsmith set himself the task of reading Mandeville as a scathing critic of the entire tradition of public virtue in general and *The Tatler* as the exponent of this tradition in particular.¹² Similarly, E. J. Hundert has argued that 'a satisfactory discussion of Mandeville's achievement must recover the sources and strategies of his project as he understood it'. Moreover, 'it must provide an account of Mandeville's development of this enterprise in the context of those contemporary ideological disputes in which he was embroiled'.¹³

⁸ Phillipson 1993, p. 227.

⁹ Horne 1978, pp. 47–8; Horne 1993, pp. 232, 234–5; Hundert 1994, pp. 68–74. See also Kerkhof 1995, p. 220; Goldsmith 1985, p. 67.

¹⁰ See however the short but perceptive analysis in Burt 1992, pp. 139–40.

¹¹ Horne 1978.

¹² Goldsmith 1985; Castiglione 1993. See also Goldsmith 1988, where Mandeville's impact on the Scottish Enlightenment is briefly discussed. For this see also Kerkhof 1995.

¹³ Hundert 1994, p. 14.

In so far as Mandeville's actual contexts are concerned, there has been a wide scholarly agreement that he severely criticised all moral and political theories which relied on the notion of virtue – whether in the form of Christian private or civic humanist public virtue. He especially singled out the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and the earl of Shaftesbury for scathing censure. If the targets of Mandeville's criticism have been well established, there is hardly less unanimity about his intellectual background. His indebtedness to Hobbes, and more importantly to the French *moralistes* of the late seventeenth century has long been established. Amongst these were Pierre Bayle, Jacques Esprit, La Rochefoucauld and above all Pierre Nicole. More recently, scholars have emphasised the traditions of medicine and physiology as well as the ancient philosophies of Epicurus and Lucretius in the formation of Mandeville's philosophy.¹⁴

Nonetheless, whilst commentators have acknowledged the significance of such notions as politeness and honour to Mandeville on the one hand, and have regarded the recovery of his intellectual context as their main task on the other, they have not only passed over but in fact dismissed altogether the relevance of the early modern tradition of civility and honour to Mandeville. They have done this by sharply distinguishing Mandeville's notions of politeness and honour from the aristocratic world in general and from the court society in particular. Although Horne admits that politeness was an important element in Mandeville's theory and that politeness was 'so important to the aristocracy', he distances Mandeville from the aristocracy and the *Beau Monde*.¹⁵ Similarly, Hundert sharply separates Mandeville's notion of sociability and politeness from earlier, predominantly aristocratic notions of courtesy and civility. Sociability was, for Mandeville, 'commercial sociability', and his concepts of politeness as well as honour were both exclusively geared towards commercial relations.¹⁶ Of course, Hundert acknowledges that in his discussions of civility and politeness Mandeville addressed 'the beau monde' but goes on to claim that this constituted 'the elite of commercial rather than court societies'.¹⁷ It comes as no surprise that, according to Hundert's interpretative framework, Mandeville mocked 'the defenders of aristocratic ideals', whilst stressing the importance of the commercial world.¹⁸ Despite the fact that some of his French intellectual predecessors

¹⁴ Hundert 1994, pp. 35–49; Hundert 1995. See also e.g. E. D. James 1975; Horne 1993; Cook 1999.

¹⁵ Horne 1978, pp. 45–7; Horne 1993, p. 230.

¹⁶ Hundert 1994, pp. 35, 17, 34, 73–4, 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 117. ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

were interested in the court, Mandeville had, so Hundert tells us, 'only a passing interest in the rigorously exclusive social arena of court society'. It followed that Mandeville's notion of politeness had little to do with the 'codification of the *politesse*, featured in Renaissance courtesy books like Castiglione's *The Courtier* that developed in seventeenth-century Parisian salons and then became the social legislation of a French aristocratic elite for whom the norms of acceptable conduct at Versailles would be labelled immoral in urban and commercial settings'.¹⁹

The present chapter seeks to question these increasingly prevalent accounts and to argue that it is precisely this context of the early modern tradition of civility – stemming originally from Italian Renaissance court culture in general and, at least in so far as England was concerned, to a large extent from Castiglione in particular, but so singularly ignored by recent commentators – which helps us to understand Mandeville's arguments in their own historical context. In contrast to many recent accounts, I seek to demonstrate that in developing his notions of politeness, honour and duelling Mandeville drew directly on the tradition of external or theatrical civility, which was closely linked with court society. For Mandeville, politeness only concerned our external appearance, and duelling was the chief means of safeguarding it against those who sought to call it in doubt.

But if Mandeville was defending both theatrical civility and duelling as its integral part, it follows that he had a strongly polemical edge against those who challenged these views. Little wonder that Cleomenes told Horatio in the second dialogue of the second part of *The fable* that 'Men have discours'd very inconsistently on Duelling'.²⁰ It is of course a commonplace that Mandeville was highly critical of the writings of Addison, Steele and Shaftesbury. But once we recognise that Mandeville's conception's of politeness, honour and duelling arose from the tradition of civility and, more particularly, that he was advocating duelling and a specific interpretation of civility, we can also see that he was not only criticising Addison and Steele's or Shaftesbury's specific notions; he was above all challenging their entire assessment of civility and politeness. At the same time, Mandeville, just like his adversaries, was participating in a much larger debate about the definitions of civility and politeness.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 33, 118. Hundert acknowledges (p. 118) that Mandeville, 'unlike most of his contemporaries, was directly familiar' with 'the French language of politeness'. While he does not justify his claim about Mandeville's contemporaries, it is very unfortunate that he did not follow up the argument about Mandeville.

²⁰ Bernard Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 93.

Mandeville, in short, sided with those who argued that politeness and civility only concerned our appearances and that there needed to be no relationship between our external behaviour and our internal morality or self. Even more, he argued that any attempt to relate external behaviour to our internal self was a seriously misleading project, which would only end in bitter tears.

As well as enabling us to portray Mandeville as a participant in the early modern debate about civility, honour and duelling, this context also helps us to have a new perspective on several aspects of Mandeville's philosophy. For instance, when Mandeville emphasised, as Hundert has perceptively pointed out, that 'behavior in public was species of performance designed to win approval',²¹ he was not so much formulating an entirely novel principle but rather merely carefully subscribing to a well-established idea of civility and politeness. Again, one of 'Mandeville's most anxiety-provoking claim[s]' was, according to Hundert, 'that the primary stabilizing forces of this [commercial] society were those inherent in the essential theatrical relations through which it regulated itself'.²² Maybe. But in putting it forward, I seek to demonstrate that Mandeville was only applying a central characteristic of the entire tradition of civility and politeness to a new commercial context.

Finally, our placing of Mandeville's accounts of politeness, honour and duelling in the tradition of civility has an immediate bearing upon our interpretation of his overall philosophy. Although commentators have, of course, noticed the close links between commerce and politeness in Mandeville's philosophy, they have always emphasised that, according to Mandeville, commerce produced politeness.²³ But Mandeville himself also insisted that commerce required a high level of theatrical politeness. The relationship between politeness and commerce was, in short, reciprocal.

SELF-LIKING, HORIZONTAL HONOUR AND POLITENESS

Mandeville was convinced that 'all untaught Animals are only sollicitous of pleasing themselves', as he put it in the opening words of 'An enquiry into the origin of moral virtue', in part one of *The fable*.²⁴ This was especially true of a man who was 'extraordinary selfish and head-strong', and it had always been regarded as the main task of lawgivers to persuade the people to believe that it was much better 'to conquer than

²¹ Hundert 1994, p. 141. ²² Hundert 1994, p. 153.

²³ Horne 1993, p. 237; Hundert 1994, p. 120. ²⁴ Mandeville, *The fable*, 1, p. 41.

indulge his Appetites, and much better to mind the Publick than what seem'd his private Interest'.²⁵ This persuasion had been based on offering 'a Reward' for those who had given up their private good. But since there had not been enough real rewards, lawgivers had had to invent 'an imaginary one' which they had found in 'Flattery'. Everyone had been 'charm'd with Praise' or had wanted at all cost to avoid 'Contempt'. In this way people had been instructed 'in the Notions of Honour and Shame'.²⁶ It is not too much to say that honour was a central notion in Mandeville's philosophy.

By the time he published the second part of *The fable*, Mandeville had developed a more nuanced analysis of man's selfish nature, which was based on a distinction between self-love and self-liking. Whereas self-love 'was given to all Animals . . . for Self-Preservation', self-liking was 'our inclination to overrate ourselves in comparison with others', as Bert Kerkhof has defined it.²⁷ In *An enquiry into the origin of honour* the concept of self-liking was used to account for the origin of honour. Horatio opened the whole dialogue by pointing out that 'you never attempted to guess at the Origin of Honour'. Cleomenes replied that he had 'often thought of it', but had found three reasons why he had never made his account public: first, the word 'honour' was used 'in such different Acceptations'; second, explaining the meaning of honour would 'take up so much Time, that few People would have Patience to hear it'; third, the passion to which honour owed its birth had no 'commonly known' name.²⁸

Underlying our love of praise was the passion of self-liking. After Cleomenes's careful explanation Horatio felt confident in declaring that when self-liking 'is moderate and well regulated, [it] excites in us the Love of Praise, and a Desire to be applauded and thought well of by others, and stirs us up to good Actions: but . . . when it is excessive, or ill turn'd, whatever it excites in our Selves, gives Offence to others, renders us odious, and is call'd Pride'.²⁹ Although Horatio had understood that much, he could not understand why 'Honour owes its Birth to this Passion' of self-liking, which question led Cleomenes to explain the meaning of honour.

Mandeville's claim that the origins of honour were to be found in flattery and self-liking enabled him to launch a scathing attack against

²⁵ Ibid., I, pp. 41–2. ²⁶ Ibid., I, pp. 42–3.

²⁷ Kerkhof 1995, p. 220; cf. Goldsmith 1971, p. xiii.

²⁸ Bernard Mandeville, *An enquiry into the origin of honour and the usefulness of Christianity in war* (1732) in Bernard Mandeville, *Ricerca sull'origine dell'onore e sull'utilità del cristianesimo in guerra*, ed. Andrea Branchi (Florence, 1998), pp. 1–2. This is a facing-page edition. References are to the page numbers of the original edition.

²⁹ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 6–7; cf. p. 3.

what he took to be a seriously misleading account of honour. He asserted that many took honour for 'the Reward of Virtue' or even for 'Virtue itself'.³⁰ But instead of expounding this idea of the close connection between virtue and honour, Mandeville dismissed it and argued that honour was simply someone's favourable opinion of others. His notion of honour was strongly horizontal. In the Remark C of the first part of *The fable* he wrote 'by Honour, in its proper and genuine Signification, we mean nothing else but the good Opinion of others, which is counted more or less Substantial, the more or less Noise or Bustle there is made about the demonstration of it'.³¹ In *The enquiry into the origin of honour* Cleomenes explained that honour was 'always a Compliment we make to Those who act, have, or are what we approve of; it is a Term of Art to express our Concurrence with others, our Agreement with them in their Sentiments concerning the Esteem and Value they have for themselves'.³² This of course resolved Horatio's condundrum; honour was based on the fact that 'a Man adores himself'; he was simply 'worshipping Honour'.

It followed that the higher a man's pride could be raised, 'the more refin'd you may render his Notions of Honour', as Cleomenes carefully explained.³³ It was important to realise, however, that honour was reciprocal. It entailed an honour group where people exchanged compliments and honours. According to Cleomenes, honour 'signifies a Means which Men by Conversing together have found out to please and gratify one another'.³⁴ It is hardly surprising that Mandeville's contemporary critics could not agree with his uncompromising notion of horizontal honour. If you called someone 'a *Man of Honour*' this entailed, Fiddes claimed, that 'all his Actions' proceeded 'from good Motives'. In short, 'Honour ought never to be separated from Honesty'.³⁵

If Mandeville was so persistent about the importance of honour and its horizontal character he was hardly less importunate about the centrality of politeness and that these two concepts were closely linked to one another. In the third dialogue of the second part of *The fable* Horatio and Cleomenes examined politeness and its origins. Horatio asked his interlocutor: 'can you inform me, when or which Way, what we call good Manners or Politeness, came into the World?'³⁶ When Cleomenes had discussed self-love and self-liking for ten pages or so, Horatio grew impatient and repeated his question: 'But when shall we

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2. ³¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 63–4. ³² Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 9.

³³ Ibid., p. 85. ³⁴ Ibid., p. 14; see also *The fable*, II, p. 123.

³⁵ Fiddes, *A general treatise*, pp. 389, 392. ³⁶ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 128.

come to the Origin of Politeness?'³⁷ Cleomenes responded that 'we are at it now, and we need not look for it any further than in the Self-liking'.³⁸

Cleomenes was carefully following the Jansenists Pierre Nicole's, Jacques Esprit's and the Swiss Protestant Jacques Abbadie's accounts of human civility and at the same time questioning their ultimate preference for sincere Christian civility. As Nicole had expressed it, 'the ground of humane Civility . . . is but a kind of traffick of Self-love, wherein we endeavour to buy the affection of others, by owning a kindness for them'.³⁹ It is hardly surprising that human glory, according to Nicole, consisted of 'the good opinion others have for us'.⁴⁰ Esprit's analysis had been strikingly similar. It was self-love which explained men's proneness to human civility and complaisance. 'Altho Complaisance', Esprit had written, 'appears so opposite to the inclinations of Self-Love, and seems to sacrifice it every hour, yet she serves it with an entire Fidelity'.⁴¹ Civility was thus based on selfishness.⁴² Abbadie had also claimed that he was merely stating 'the plain Truth' when he had written that 'Outward Civility' was 'nothing but an apparent Preference we make of our selves before all the World'.⁴³ But this portrayal of human civility had only provided the counter-image of true Christian civility. According to Esprit, 'all Human Complacency is without merit, or vitious in its original. Only Christian Complacency is truly vertuous'.⁴⁴ He had concluded his chapter on politeness: 'we may say that *Charity*, which is the Original of that Conduct which they observe toward their Neighbours, is the sole and only true *Politeness*, and real Civility, and that of all other Men, Christians are the truly Polite and Civil People'.⁴⁵ Nicole had emphasised that he wanted 'to make our Civility different from that of Men of the World. It must be perfectly true, perfectly sincere'.⁴⁶ 'The Fountain head' of civility, as he summarised his entire argument, was to be found in 'Divine Reasons'.⁴⁷

In the second part of *The fable* Cleomenes retorted with a lie direct. 'The Fountain Head' of politeness, he declared, was 'human Nature itself'.⁴⁸ In Mandeville's account self-liking explained the origin of both honour and politeness. According to the principle of self-liking, men always valued themselves more than other men. But from this it followed, as Cleomenes quickly pointed out, 'that all untaught Men will ever be

³⁷ Ibid., II, p. 138. ³⁸ Ibid., II, p. 138. ³⁹ [Nicole], *Moral essays*, II, pp. 234–5.

⁴⁰ Ibid., II, pp. 288–9. ⁴¹ [Esprit], *The falshood*, p. 81, in general, pp. 81–4.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 93–4, 91–2. ⁴³ Abbadie, *The art*, p. 272.

⁴⁴ [Esprit], *The falshood*, p. 88. see also pp. 90–1. ⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴⁶ [Nicole], *Moral essays*, II, pp. 254–5. ⁴⁷ Ibid., I, pp. 237–8.

⁴⁸ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 128.

hateful to one another in Conversation'. Such a situation would obviously lead to most unbearable circumstances. Indeed, 'a Declaration of their Sentiments' would render two equal men 'insufferable to each other; which among unciviliz'd Men would happen every Moment'. The effects of such an 'Inconveniency' were only too obvious and needed no elaboration. The conclusion Cleomenes drew from his account was that 'the Disturbance and Uneasiness, that must be caused by Self-liking' had necessarily produced 'what we call good Manners and Politeness'.⁴⁹ Mandeville had put the same point across even more forcefully in the preface to the second part of *The fable*. 'Fashionable People', he insisted, were 'continually soothing each other's Frailties' by 'the very Politeness of Conversation, the Complacency'.⁵⁰

Self-liking had thus first produced the notion of honour and thereby had also given rise to politeness. Mandeville was convinced, as he insisted in the first part of *The fable*, that 'there is nothing [which] refines Mankind more than Love and Honour'. The idea of honour was in fact so important that it could be called nothing less than 'the tye of Society'; nothing had been 'half so instrumental to their civilizing of Mankind'. Without honour men 'would soon degenerate into cruel Villains and treacherous Slaves'.⁵¹

Politeness played a dual role in human sociability. On the one hand, it was the way in which we gratified the self-liking of other men. We agreed with them about their worth and esteem; we honoured them by acting politely towards them. On the other hand, politeness was also the way in which we hid our own excessive self-esteem – our pride. Cleomenes argued:

When once the Generality begin to conceal the high Value they have for themselves, Men must become more tolerable to one another. Now new Improvements must be made every Day, 'till some of them grow impudent enough, not only to deny the high Value they have for themselves, but likewise to pretend that they have greater Value for others, than they have for themselves. This will bring in Complaisance, and now Flattery.⁵²

Even more, whilst politeness had started as a means of hiding our self-liking and pride, in the course of time it had become its substitute. Hiding

⁴⁹ Ibid., II, p. 138.

⁵⁰ Ibid., II, p. 17. But cf. B[ernard] M[andeville], *Free thoughts on religion, the Church, and national happiness* (London, 1720), p. 13, where Mandeville wrote that 'SLANDER and Back-biting are made a Jest of: Among the fashionable part of Mankind this Vice is treated as a Piece of Gallantry to shew ones Wit, daily practis'd for the Entertainment of both Sexes.'

⁵¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 121, 218–19. ⁵² Ibid., II, pp. 145, 150.

our pride, in other words, had become a way to rejoice in it. This was a reciprocal process. The more pride men had and thus 'the greater Value they set on the Esteem of others', the more politely they behaved.⁵³ Conversely, 'a refin'd Education, and a continual Commerce with the *Beau monde*' – a high level of politeness – increased man's pride. 'The Man of Sense and Education', Mandeville argued, 'never exults more in his Pride than when he hides it with the greatest Dexterity.'⁵⁴

Furthermore, although pride and thereby honour played important roles in the development of politeness, hardly less significant was the part played by their opposites, shame and dishonour. Whereas shame was '*a sorrowful Reflexion on our own Unworthiness*', dishonour consisted 'in the bad Opinion and Contempt of others'.⁵⁵ At one point Mandeville emphasised the importance of shame and argued that it had a crucial impact on the development of sociability and politeness. 'It is incredible', he wrote, 'how necessary an Ingredient Shame is to make us sociable', and continued: 'the Happiness of Conversation depends upon it, and no Society could be polish'd, if the Generality of Mankind were not subject to it'.⁵⁶

Self-liking, pride and shame were natural qualities but politeness, although based on natural passions, was not in itself natural. How was politeness therefore possible? Mandeville was convinced that politeness, like many other human institutions, had been invented by clever politicians.⁵⁷ There was little doubt that it was through education that people in general learned civility and good manners. In the first part of *The fable* Mandeville argued that from man's 'Infancy throughout his Education, we endeavour to increase instead of lessening or destroying this Sense of Shame; and the only Remedy prescrib'd, is a strict Observance of certain Rules to avoid those Things that might bring this troublesome Sense of Shame upon him'. These rules of politeness must be inculcated in men's mind from an early age, otherwise it was almost impossible to acquire them.⁵⁸

Mandeville insisted that learning good manners and politeness was a difficult task. First, this explained why it had taken such a long time for mankind to acquire the sophistication of civility which Mandeville assumed he witnessed in contemporary London – 'Nations can never be made polite, but by length of Time.'⁵⁹ More importantly, learning the skills of politeness was equally difficult for individual men and it

⁵³ Ibid., II, p. 65.

⁵⁴ Ibid., I, p. 79, II, pp. 91, 125.

⁵⁵ Ibid., II, p. 64, italics in the original.

⁵⁶ Ibid., I, p. 68.

⁵⁷ Ibid., II, p. 149.

⁵⁸ Ibid., I, pp. 68, 72.

⁵⁹ Ibid., II, pp. 306–7.

required a strenuous education and training.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, although the learning of civility could be difficult, it was a much lighter task than its alternative – learning to be virtuous. Whereas ‘virtue bids us subdue’ our passions, politeness and ‘good Breeding’ merely require that ‘we should hide our Appetites’. This of course went a long way towards explaining why there were so few virtuous men around and such an abundance of polite men.⁶¹

Given that politeness had such a central role for Mandeville, it would be of crucial importance to understand what he meant by it. Mandeville’s overall definition of politeness was entirely familiar. There was nothing original in his argument that politeness or ‘the Art of Civility’ signified pleasing and gratifying one another.⁶² He was following the entire early modern tradition of courtesy and civility when he defined the main aim of politeness as to be ‘agreeable’ and acceptable to those with whom one socialised.⁶³ A chief end of the polite, argued Mandeville, like countless others before him, was ‘to render themselves acceptable to all they converse with’.⁶⁴ But if Mandeville concurred with earlier writers of civility about the meaning of the term, he concurred with them hardly less about the central role of the court in its development. In the preface to the second part of *The fable* he discussed ‘the *Beau Monde*’, ‘the Rules of Politeness, and all the Laws of Honour’ and wrote: ‘It is counted ridiculous for Men to commit Violence upon themselves, or to maintain, that Virtue requires Self-denial; all Court-Philosophers are agreed, that nothing can be lovely or desirable, that is mortifying or uneasy.’⁶⁵ Perhaps Mandeville did not have in mind in this passage the Castiglionean idea of *sprezzatura* or Philibert de Vienne’s *The philosopher of the court*, but the centrality of the court in his notion of politeness is striking.

Mandeville thought that the beginning of civility could be pinned down. Perhaps it was invented by clever politicians, but its original function had been pleasing those above us. It had occurred when people had wanted to pay ‘Adulation’ to ‘Conquerors and Tyrants’, who ‘having every Body to fear, were always alarm’d at the least Shadow of Opposition’. By these original pieces of civility men had expressed ‘submissive and defenceless Postures’.⁶⁶ Mandeville thus agreed with those courtesy and

⁶⁰ Ibid., II, p. 141. ⁶¹ Ibid., I, p. 72. ⁶² Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 14.

⁶³ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 12. ⁶⁴ Ibid., II, p. 65.

⁶⁵ Ibid., II, p. 12. Horne 1993, p. 230 has claimed that ‘the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, Steele, Addison, Shaftesbury, and Berkeley represent the “Beau Monde” for Mandeville’. I find it difficult to concur. The beau monde, for Mandeville, were precisely those who most carefully exhibited the values of theatrical civility.

⁶⁶ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, pp. 151–3.

civility authors who emphasised that a main aim of the whole code of courtesy and civility was pleasing the prince. Moreover, this was no empty historical truism. George I could hardly be said to be a tyrant, yet the whole discourse of politeness was still carefully displayed at his court to please him. He must be 'serv'd, approach'd, and address'd to with the most humble Submission, and superlative Respect', as Mandeville put it.⁶⁷ The courtier's main aim was thus pleasing the king. The 'whole Machine', wrote Mandeville, 'seems only contriv'd to do Honour to the King' and it looks as if every courtier 'was only born to procure him [i.e. the king] either Ease or Pleasure'. Everyone who resided at court had to be 'well vers'd in all manner of Elegancy and Politeness'.⁶⁸

Furthermore, Mandeville also concurred with earlier courtesy writers when he declared that the court was not only the birthplace of civility but that it had always been the place of most refined manners and politeness. When Mandeville discussed 'Modes and Fashions', 'Worldly Honour' and 'the *beau monde*' he linked them with 'Courts'.⁶⁹ In *The Female Tatler*, he had made the Oxford gentleman claim that 'there is in our Camps . . . as well bred Men as in any Court of *Europe*'.⁷⁰ Four years later in *The fable* Mandeville had developed this idea into a more general principle that because 'there is nothing [which] refines Mankind more than Love and Honour', it followed that 'the greatest Schools of Breeding and good Manners are Courts and Armies'.⁷¹ Presenting the sharpest contrast between a state of uncivilised nature and the most civilised forms of behaviour, he juxtaposed 'Forests' to 'Courts'.⁷² In *Free thoughts on religion* he argued simply that courtiers are the politest men. Whereas 'Porters and Carmen are reckon'd the rudest and most uncivilis'd part of the Nation; the reverse of them, and most Polite part are the Courtiers'.⁷³

Not only have many scholars unduly dismissed the importance of the court in Mandeville's theory of politeness; they have equally misleadingly argued that Mandeville juxtaposed the court and the town. According to Hundert, 'for Mandeville and his intended audience, . . . "politeness" had come to refer precisely to the manners of "the Town" rather than of the court'.⁷⁴ As Anna Bryson has shown, however, there was no such

⁶⁷ M[andeville], *Free thoughts on religion*, p. 336. ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 337, 336.

⁶⁹ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 105. Hundert has argued that in his polemics Mandeville criticised Peter de la Court's republican *Fables moral and political*. Mandeville's keen interest in the court suggests that part of his polemics against de la Court could have been a defence of the luxurious court; see e.g. [Peter de la Court], *Fables moral and political, with large explications*, transl. [anon.] (2 vols., London, 1703), I, pp. 55, 59.

⁷⁰ *The Female Tatler*, no. 84 (16 January 1710). ⁷¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 121.

⁷² *Ibid.*, I, p. 207. ⁷³ M[andeville], *Free thoughts on religion*, p. 273. ⁷⁴ Hundert 1994, p. 118.

strong antagonism between the court and the city, but the same culture of civility was meant for both sites; indeed, it was rather difficult to draw the line in such a clear-cut manner.⁷⁵ Mandeville himself was also clearly aware of this cultural overlap. While he could present the court as the birthplace of politeness and as the politest place still in his own times, this did not commit him to a contrast between the court and the city. When he gave his description of the man he would himself 'choose for Conversation' he provided a long but rather conventional list of qualities which this ideal gentleman needed to possess. Amongst these qualities was a thorough knowledge 'of any thing that is done in Court or City'.⁷⁶ Of course, the polite people did not have to be aristocrats; yet Mandeville still maintained that 'no Men upon Earth . . . are more Courteous, Humane, or Polite than Persons of high Birth'.⁷⁷

If Mandeville followed the 'Court-Philosophers' carefully in his account of the birth, rise and social context of civility and politeness, he followed them hardly less carefully when he began to discuss its actual content. As we have seen, Mandeville argued that originally politeness had begun as a mode of pleasing the prince. He was convinced that it had retained this quality up to the early eighteenth century. In the preface to the second part of *The fable*, he declared that 'the greatest care of the *Beau Monde* is to be agreeable, and appear well-bred'. Indeed they carefully imitated the fashions and habits of the court. By 'Virtue', Mandeville argued, 'the *Beau Monde*' meant nothing else 'but a great Veneration for whatever is courtly or sublime'. Moreover, they thought that 'it chiefly consists in a strict Compliance to the Rules of Politeness, and all the laws of Honour'.⁷⁸ In *The enquiry into the origin of honour*, Mandeville put this in even more shocking terms. 'Polite People', Cleomenes assured Horatio, always 'conform to all Ceremonies that are fashionable with Regard to the Time and the Places they are in'.⁷⁹

Although Mandeville could depict continuity in the culture of politeness, he was not unaware of several great changes as well. In fact, he stressed that the detailed forms of politeness and civility were tied to their particular contexts. What was a pleasing mode of behaviour in one place or at one moment was not necessarily so in another place or at another moment. 'Swearing and not Swearing in Conversation', as he put it, 'depend upon Mode and Custom'.⁸⁰ In so far as his own time was concerned, Mandeville was convinced that he had witnessed

⁷⁵ Anna Bryson 1998. ⁷⁶ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 338. ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 66.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, II, p. 12. ⁷⁹ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 108. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

an unprecedented rise of the detailed code of conduct. Of course there had been a general tendency towards an ever increasing level of politeness and sophistication of civility. Mandeville could speak about 'the Rudiments of good Manners in an infant Nation'.⁸¹ Just as 'in all other Arts and Sciences', so in good manners and politeness there had been a slow and gradual but continuous and steady progress from the rude beginning to the refined eighteenth century.⁸² 'For as good Manners encrease', Cleomenes argued, 'we see, that the highest Compliments are made common, and new ones to Superiors invented instead of them.' This passage shows first of all that, according to Mandeville, there had not been a replacement of an aristocratic politeness by a commercial politeness, as some commentators have claimed. On the contrary, as soon as certain rules of politeness had trickled down from the elite to the people at large, new rules had always been invented by the elite. In this sense, politeness always remained predominantly elitist. But the passage also implies a notion of a steady refinement of politeness. 'Human Nature' could remain 'the same', but the manners became more refined, 'as the World grows more polish'd'.⁸³ By the sixteenth century the rules for 'Punctilio in Behaviour, which at first were very uncertain and precarious, came to be better understood, and refin'd upon from Time to Time'. By the early seventeenth century, however, politeness had for the first time reached 'all over Europe, especially in *France*' an exceptionally high level.⁸⁴

Politeness could have wider resonances but, for Mandeville, as for the whole tradition of civility, there were two chief things which a gentleman must carefully look after in order to appear 'agreeable' and hence polite. First, politeness consisted in a detailed code of conduct – of various 'Piece[s] of Civility'.⁸⁵ Mandeville used 'good Manners' and 'Politeness' as synonyms,⁸⁶ and cited as his specific examples of politeness 'the Ceremonies of bowing, and pulling off Hats, and other Rules of Behaviour'.⁸⁷ Taken out of their context these various pieces of civility might indeed look utterly absurd. The whole culture of politeness could be a 'Comedy of Manners'.⁸⁸ But in their own context they were perfectly appropriate. We could 'laugh' at 'taking off the Hat' – think it is but a piece of '*Gothick Absurdity*' and be 'well assured, that it must have had its Origin from the basest Flattery'. And yet, 'walking with our Hats on', we could not 'meet an Acquaintance with whom we are not very familiar,

⁸¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 150.

⁸² *Ibid.*, II, pp. 141–3, 146.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 152–3.

⁸⁴ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 63–4.

⁸⁵ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 151.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 138.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 149.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 79.

without shewing this Piece of Civility; nay it would be a Pain to us not to do it'.⁸⁹

Secondly, if a gentleman wanted to be polite he had to combine refined outward manners with no less polite ways of conducting a civil conversation. Again Mandeville wholeheartedly concurred with this. According to him, there was a close correlation between language and politeness: it was only when 'Language is arrived to great Perfection' that 'Society' can be said to be 'carried to some degree of Politeness'.⁹⁰ Politeness not only consisted of such rules of behaviour as bowing and doffing hats; it equally consisted of 'Conversation' and 'Speaking and Writing'.⁹¹

Moreover, according to Mandeville, it was the court which provided the most polite forms of conversation. Cleomenes told his interlocutor that a fine language was 'a Custom peculiar to the *beau monde*'; 'in all Countries' they were 'the undoubted Refiners of Language'. When Horatio claimed that were they not 'The Preachers, Playwrights, Orators, and fine Writers' who 'refin'd upon Language', Cleomenes hastily brushed these objections aside. These people merely made 'the best of what is ready coin'd to their Hands'. 'The true and only Mint of Words and Phrases', Cleomenes declared, 'is the Court; and the polite Part of every Nation are in Possession of the' most appropriate rules of expression. Of course, all 'technick Words' in various arts were coined by experts. Nevertheless, 'whatever is borrow'd from them for metaphorical Use, or from other Languages, living or dead, must first have the Stamp of the Court, and the Approbation of the *beau monde*, before it can pass for current'. But if this was so, it followed, as Cleomenes pointed out, that 'whatever is not used among them [i.e. the *beau monde*], or comes abroad without their Sanction, is either vulgar, pedantick, or obsolete'.⁹²

Mandeville's embracing of the early modern theory of civility was not confined to a general description of pleasing and agreeable behaviour and conversation. He also insisted that both politeness and civil conversation were purely theatrical and artificial social customs. This becomes clear from Mandeville's explanation of the difficulty of internalising their rules. Horatio proclaimed that it was 'inconceivable' that 'rational Creatures should do all this [i.e. good manners and politeness], without thinking or knowing what they were about'. Learning to perform 'agreeable Postures, a graceful Mein, an easy Carriage, and a genteel outward Behaviour', being merely 'bodily Motion[s]', was one thing. It was quite another to observe good manners everywhere, 'in speaking, writing, and

⁸⁹ Ibid., II, p. 151.

⁹⁰ Ibid., II, p. 295.

⁹¹ Ibid., II, pp. 149–50.

⁹² Ibid., II, p. 292.

ordering Actions to be perform'd by others', because this required 'the Exercise of the Understanding'.⁹³ But Mandeville further insisted that artificiality and thus contrariety to nature was the whole purpose of politeness. As Cleomenes explained, 'the more civiliz'd' people are 'the more they think it injurious to have their Nature seen'. This explained the usage of make-up and wigs.⁹⁴ But what further compounded this learning process was the fact that no matter how refined and therefore artificial the forms of civility and politeness were it was of utmost importance to learn to perform them in such a skilful way that they appeared completely natural. As the example of doffing our hats demonstrated, the polite forms of behaviour were far from being natural to man – indeed, they were artificial by their very nature. Nevertheless, all of them should be internalised to such a degree that they would become a gentleman's second nature. Mandeville insisted, as we have already seen, that nothing must appear difficult for a polite courtier or gentleman.

In the preface to *An enquiry into the origin of honour*, Mandeville wrote: 'How natural seem all Civilities to be to a Gentleman! Yet Time was, that he would not have made his Bow, if he had not been bid.'⁹⁵ It was precisely because of this that 'in a tolerable Education we are so industriously and so assiduously instructed, from our most early Infancy' in these pieces of outward politeness. This way they became our second nature; 'even before we are Men we hardly look upon a mannerly Deportment as a Thing acquired'. On the contrary, a 'thousand things are call'd easy and natural in Postures and Motions . . . that have caus'd infinite Pains to others as well as ourselves, and which we know to be the Product of Art'.⁹⁶ For Mandeville good manners became our second nature in another sense too. Most of the people who were not only able to perform the detailed forms of civility but did so all the time, had 'never thought on the Origin of Politeness' nor even their real 'Benefit' to 'Society'.⁹⁷

But if politeness was entirely artificial, it also only concerned the exterior. This had of course been a hotly contested notion in the tradition of civility and politeness. Many had argued that civility only pertained to our appearances and that it therefore consisted of fashion and flattery. But this notion had been challenged by those who, whilst of course accepting that politeness meant pleasing our fellow-men, had nevertheless wanted to link politeness with virtue. There is little doubt that Mandeville upheld the former view, and that his account of politeness could be read as a highly critical response to the entire tradition of linking politeness

⁹³ Ibid., II, p. 141. ⁹⁴ Ibid., II, pp. 303–4. ⁹⁵ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. xi.

⁹⁶ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, pp. 149–50. ⁹⁷ Ibid., II, p. 141.

and virtue in general and to Addison's, Steele's and Shaftesbury's attempts to this effect in particular. In the third dialogue of the second part of *The fable*, Cleomenes told Horatio that 'the Doctrine of good Manners' required nothing but 'the outward Appearance of those in Fashion' and proclaimed:

All the Precepts of good Manners throughout the World have the same Tendency, and are no more than the various Methods of making ourselves acceptable to others, with as little Prejudice to ourselves as is possible: by which Artifice we assist one another in the Enjoyments of Life, and refining upon Pleasure; and every individual Person is rendred more happy by it, in the Fruition of all the good Things he can purchase, than he could have been without such Behaviour.

Cleomenes's conclusion from all this was that in so far as 'the *Beau Monde*' was concerned, 'their chief Study and greatest Sollicitude' had always consisted of 'outward Appearance'.⁹⁸

Mandeville drew exactly the same conclusion in *The enquiry into the origin of honour*. Cleomenes told his interlocutor that 'the *beau monde*, and all well bred People' desired 'to be judged of from outward Appearance'. Indeed, this was symptomatic of 'the Fashionable and the Polite' that their 'Virtue is seldom extended beyond good Manners'.⁹⁹ Once again, Mandeville wholly agreed with those who linked this overriding concern with the exterior to the court. Most people, he wrote in *Free thoughts on religion*, who resided in the court were 'vain People, that love Shew and Gawdiness, and from an idle and plentiful Education, have learn'd to delight in nothing but the outside of Things'.¹⁰⁰

But if the exterior of a polite gentleman was thought to be so important, it should come as no surprise that his attire played a prominent role in shaping this exterior. Again this had been a central characteristic of the polite gentleman for theatrical civility and one which Addison and Steele for instance had so strenuously opposed. And once again Mandeville identified himself with those who emphasised the importance of the polite gentleman's attire. 'Modes and Fashions', he argued succinctly in *The enquiry into the origin of honour*, were a necessary part of 'the *beau monde*'.¹⁰¹ But in *The fable* Mandeville had already discussed clothes and their importance for the polite gentleman at much greater length.

In the first part of *The fable* Mandeville proclaimed that 'to appear decently is a Civility, and often a Duty, which, without any Regard to our

⁹⁸ Ibid., II, pp. 146–7. ⁹⁹ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 107.

¹⁰⁰ M[andeville], *Free thoughts on religion*, p. 338. ¹⁰¹ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 105.

selves, we owe to those we converse with'.¹⁰² But while even Addison and Steele could have agreed with this, Mandeville went much further when he argued that unknown people were always 'honour'd according to their Clothes and other Accoutrements they have about them'. Therefore, the way in which people dressed was of crucial importance. People received 'Civilities' according to how 'fashionable Clothes' they were wearing.¹⁰³ In the second part of *The fable*, Cleomenes pointed out that fashionable clothes were an essential part of politeness. Moreover, 'the most admired among the fashionable People that delight in outward Vanity, and know how to dress well', he went on, 'would be highly displeas'd if their Clothes, and Skill in putting them on, should be look'd upon otherwise than as Part of themselves'.¹⁰⁴

As well as being artificial the entire panoply of politeness was based on dissimulation, hypocrisy and flattery. It was, in short, 'Modish Deceit'¹⁰⁵ – it consisted in nothing but 'a dexterous Management of our selves, a stifling of our Appetites, and hiding the real Sentiments of our Hearts before others'.¹⁰⁶ But when Mandeville argued that polite behaviour was by definition hypocritical and was thus governed by flattery he was scarcely putting forward a highly original argument. As we have seen, this had always been at the heart of the entire tradition of theatrical civility and politeness. Mandeville was thus once again following a well-trodden path. His insistence on the hypocrisy of politeness becomes clear already from his discussion of sociability in general. Man was an entirely selfish creature. 'But be we Savages or Politicians', Mandeville declared, 'it is impossible that Man, mere fallen Man, should act with any other View but to please himself.' It followed that hypocrisy underlay our entire social life. As Mandeville expressed it, 'since then Action is so confin'd, and we are always forc'd to do what we please, and at the same time our Thoughts are free and uncontroll'd, it is impossible we could be sociable Creatures without Hypocrisy'. But while this was true about social life in general, it was even more so about a highly polite society. 'In all Civil Societies', Mandeville argued, 'Men are taught insensibly to be Hypocrites from their Cradle.' Politeness rested entirely on dissimulation: 'all Civil Commerce would be lost, if by Art and prudent Dissimulation we had not learn'd to hide and stifle' the 'Ideas that are commonly arising within us'.¹⁰⁷ The aim of civility, as we have already seen, was not to express our inner feelings in a polite manner; on the contrary the

¹⁰² Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 126.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 128–9.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, II, p. 304.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 78.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, p. 68.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 348–9.

whole notion of civility was designed to conceal (rather than reveal) our self-liking – to disguise our genuine and true feelings of ‘that great Value, which all Individuals set upon their own Persons’¹⁰⁸ – by an exterior which would be highly pleasing.

In *The enquiry into the origin of honour* Cleomenes distinguished between ‘Malicious’ and ‘Fashionable’ hypocrites. The former pretended to be religious in order to appear sincere and thus to be able to deceive other people. Cleomenes denounced them as ‘the worst of Men’. In striking contrast, the ‘fashionable Hypocrites’ had simply ‘a Desire of being in the Fashion’ without any deceitful motive. It followed that rather than being harmful they were highly ‘beneficial to Society’. Horatio accepted all this but doubted whether fashionable hypocrites should be called hypocrites at all. Cleomenes replied, however, that ‘to make a Shew outwardly of what is not felt within, and counterfeit what is not real, is certainly Hypocrisy’. Horatio was thoroughly convinced and concluded: ‘Then, strictly speaking, good manners and Politeness must come under the same Denomination.’¹⁰⁹

If politeness was nothing less than fashionable hypocrisy it was surely governed by flattery. In the first part of *The fable*, Mandeville defined politeness, or ‘Manners and Good-breeding’ as ‘a Fashionable Habit, acquir’d by Precept and example, of flattering the Pride and Selfishness of others, and concealing our own with Judgment and Dexterity’.¹¹⁰ In the second part he gave an essentially similar definition. According to Cleomenes, ‘Politeness and good Manners’ were nothing but ‘flattering the Pride of others, and concealing our own’.¹¹¹ As soon as men had started to conceal their self-liking, ‘Complaisance’ and ‘Flattery’ had been brought in.¹¹²

Exactly the same rules of hypocrisy, flattery and empty politeness were expected to guide the conduct of a civil conversation. Because the ultimate aim of civil conversation had always been to please those with whom one happened to converse, perhaps the most important of its rules had demanded that one should never contradict one’s interlocutors. For many, to contradict one’s interlocutors had amounted to the most serious breach of the rules of civil conversation, so much so in fact that it could have thought to provoke a duel. As we have seen, however, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century many authors had endeavoured to find out ways to contradict one’s interlocutors politely and thus to conduct a polite, but genuine, conversation. Mandeville

¹⁰⁸ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 3. ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–2. ¹¹⁰ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 77.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 108. ¹¹² *Ibid.*, II, p. 145.

rejected this, returning to the idea that contradicting must never be part of a civil conversation. It was, he argued in the words of Cleomenes in *The enquiry into the origin of honour*, a distinctive character of the *beau monde* that they were 'all equally cautious of offending' anyone. But if they wanted to avoid at all cost giving offence, it meant that 'polite People contradict No body, but conform to all Ceremonies that are fashionable with Regard to the Time and the Places they are in'.¹¹³

When Horatio pointed out in the sixth dialogue of the second part of *The fable* that he was 'glad that speaking low is the Fashion among well-bred People in *England*', Cleomenes used this as an example to demonstrate that the real end of a polite conversation was pleasure rather than the exchange of genuinely held ideas. Although 'Bawling and Impetuosity' was 'more natural' than using a low voice, the latter was the 'most rational Piece of good Manners' and 'the Art of Flattery'. When 'speaking low' a man not only 'displays his own Modesty and Humility in an agreeable manner'; he also makes to his interlocutor 'a great Compliment'.¹¹⁴

Cleomenes strongly argued that language had not been developed in order to convey our thoughts. It only served a purely external purpose. Of course, 'when Men speak, they desire that the Purport of the Sounds they utter should be known and apprehended by others'. But, Cleomenes went on, they did not 'speak, in order that their Thoughts may be known, and their Sentiments laid open and seen through by others'.¹¹⁵ Cleomenes thus agreed with those who had argued that the worst mistake in civil conversation was precisely to begin a proper conversation – a conversation where men expressed their genuine sentiments. In the first part of *The fable* Mandeville went so far as to state that 'if all we think was to be laid open to others in the same manner as it is to our selves, it is impossible that endued with Speech we could be sufferable to one another'.¹¹⁶ But Mandeville put this idea even more bluntly in a passage in the first part of the book, which is highly reminiscent of Philibert de Vienne's satirical account, and highly ironical of Shaftesbury's insistence that men should be allowed 'to speak their minds seriously'.¹¹⁷ A man devoid of politeness, Mandeville wrote, who 'offers to speak the Truth of his Heart, and what he feels within, is the most contemptible Creature upon Earth, tho' he committed no other Fault'.¹¹⁸

The facts that politeness had a progressive tendency and that it must appear entirely natural, that despite all this it was fully artificial and

¹¹³ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 108.

¹¹⁴ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, pp. 291–2.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., II, p. 289.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., I, p. 349.

¹¹⁷ Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, p. 34.

¹¹⁸ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 72.

that it was governed by hypocrisy and flattery, were all closely intertwined. It followed that in the course of time civility had become more refined and had soon been wholly based on hypocrisy and flattery. Yet, at the same time it had become evermore distant from man's natural behaviour whilst looking evermore natural. 'Whatever Alterations', Mandeville wrote, 'may be made in the Sense of Words, by Time; yet, as the World grows more polish'd, Flattery becomes less bare-faced, and the Design of it upon Man's Pride is better disguis'd than it was formerly.'¹¹⁹

In formulating his notion of politeness, Mandeville was not only arguing for a purely external civility; at the same time he was also arguing *against* those who had put forward the competing notion. According to this concept, outward politeness must bear a close relationship to a gentleman's inner self. In particular, it had been insisted that politeness must be closely linked with virtue. Mandeville's entire theory of politeness was designed to discredit this rival theory. Above all, he questioned any attempt to combine politeness and virtue as utterly futile and a complete waste of time. Perhaps, he noted condescendingly, there were 'Men of greater Sincerity' who dared to 'examine themselves' – 'serious and able Enquirers', who refused 'to trust to Outsides, and will not be barr'd from searching into the Bottom of Things'. Nonetheless, 'the *beau monde*, and all well bred People', 'the Fashionable and the Polite', he insisted, wanted to be judged by 'outward Appearance'.¹²⁰

In the preface to the second part of *The fable*, Mandeville wrote that 'in almost every part of a Gentleman's Behaviour' it was obvious that there was 'a Disagreement between the outward Appearances, and what is felt within, that was clashing with Uprightness and Sincerity'.¹²¹ It was of course true that 'the Doctrine of good Manners teaches Men to speak well of all Virtues'. Yet, as such 'the Art of good Manners has nothing to do with Virtue or Religion'.¹²² Even more shockingly, Cleomenes insisted later in the same book that since politeness was only concerned with 'outward Compliance' it followed that 'good Manners are not inconsistent with Wickedness'.¹²³

At the very end of the treatise, Mandeville suddenly singled out Shaftesbury for criticism. Whilst acknowledging that he was 'a very polite Writer' who used 'courtly Language', Mandeville nevertheless found his attempt to combine virtue and outward politeness, or 'Innocence of Manners and wordly Greatness', though perhaps 'beautiful and

¹¹⁹ Ibid., II, p. 152.

¹²⁰ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 107.

¹²¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 17.

¹²² Ibid., II, p. 146.

¹²³ Ibid., II, pp. 281–2.

amiable', yet ultimately utterly forlorn.¹²⁴ In *The Female Tatler* Mandeville distinguished those people who were only interested in 'Fashionable' clothes, 'Pompous Equipage' and 'Modish Furniture, both for Use and Magnificence' from 'Men of Polite Learning'. Whereas the former were extremely useful for society, the 'Men of Polite Learning' earned nothing short of ridicule from Mandeville. They 'read the same Books twenty times over and over, become Critically versed in Classick Authors, and without Expectation, or Possibility of ever being a Farthing the better for it, pursue an endless Study, that is of no manner of use to Human Society'.¹²⁵

Mandeville's most searching defence of purely external politeness broke down the difference between this kind of politeness and one that bore an intimate relationship to man's inner virtue, which was so central to his opponents. When Cleomenes defended external politeness Horatio rejoined that 'there is more Honesty and less Deceit among plain, untaught People, than there is among those that are more artful; and therefore I should have look'd for true Love and unfeign'd Affection, among those that live in a natural Simplicity, rather than any where else'. Cleomenes was not convinced by Horatio's arguments. The love of uncivilised people was no more natural or genuine than that of the polite. All people, irrespective of their level of politeness, were led by 'their Passions, and natural Appetites'. As Cleomenes expressed it, 'artful People may dissemble Love, and pretend to Friendship, where they have none; but they are influenc'd by their Passions, and natural Appetites, as well as Savages, though they gratify them in another manner'.¹²⁶ The sharp distinction between the hypocritical civility of the polite and the genuine honesty of the uncivilised effectively collapsed. No matter how dissembling and hypocritical the love and friendship of the polite were they were based on the same natural passions and appetites, and were therefore as natural and as genuine as the love of the uncivilised. The most formal politeness, in brief, rested on exactly the same natural passions as the most genuine behaviour.

POLITENESS, PRIDE AND DUELLING

'The Reverse of Honour', Mandeville wrote, 'is Dishonour, or Ignominy, which consists in the bad Opinion and Contempt of others.'¹²⁷ It followed that if polite and agreeable conduct was a way to gratify someone, to

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 356–7. ¹²⁵ *The Female Tatler*, no. 64 (30 November 1709).

¹²⁶ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 305. ¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, p. 64.

pay honour to him, a converse behaviour was a certain means of demonstrating dishonour. Mandeville, in other words, wholeheartedly accepted the idea that a strong sense of civility and politeness entailed an equally strong sense of insult and affront. When he stated that 'it is certain, that such [polite] Behaviour makes us more tolerable to one another than we could be otherwise', the implication was not so much that people could put up with various forms of disruptive and scandalous behaviour, let alone that they had more genuine toleration towards other people's opinions. Given the fact that politeness was only concerned with the exterior, Mandeville's point was rather that the polite could avoid such a scurrilous behaviour, so much so that they could more easily tolerate each other's presence.¹²⁸ On the other hand, 'among the lowest Vulgar, and those of the meanest Education of all, you seldom see a lasting Harmony'.¹²⁹

How was a gentleman expected to act when he was confronted with an impoliteness – when his honour had been questioned? Mandeville emphasised that a polite gentleman's honour was not only horizontal, it was also reflexive. Unlike 'a virtuous Man', who 'expects no Acknowledgements from others', the 'Man of Honour' could not only expect acknowledgement; he could even openly 'proclaim' himself 'to be such, and call to an Account Every body who dares to doubt of it'. Whereas the ethic of virtue was based on man's self-sacrifice, the ethic of honour was based on his self-liking. Man was thus allowed to set an 'inestimable Value' upon himself. Even the slightest hint of impoliteness questioned his honour. As Cleomenes put it, carefully echoing countless earlier advocates of duelling, 'the least Word, Look, or Motion, if he can find but any far-fetch'd Reason to suspect a Design in it to undervalue him' was bound to occasion a challenge.¹³⁰ All this prompted Mandeville to formulate a general rule 'that the greater and the more transcendent the Esteem is, which Men have for their own Worth, the less capable they generally are to bear Injuries without Resentment'.¹³¹ The higher the level of politeness was, the smaller the impoliteness needed to be which called for a counterattack.

When a gentleman's honour had been questioned the only possible counterattack to reclaim his tarnished reputation was a challenge. Why? As we have seen, Mandeville held that the process by which men learned and developed politeness from pride was reciprocal. This meant

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 79.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 306.

¹³⁰ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 43–4.

¹³¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 15.

that when politeness became more refined, man's pride became more vehement. Education, in other words, not only advanced our civility; it equally increased our sense of pride and thus of shame. This sense could, indeed it did, become so tender that it overshadowed our self-love – self-preservation. Explaining this, Cleomenes fully concurred with Guazzo's analysis of *The ciuile conuersation* and admitted that 'the Struggle in your Breast . . . between the Fear of Shame and the Fear of Death' was exceptionally fierce. In the end, however, the fear of shame 'conquered, because it was strongest'.¹³² In *The enquiry into the origin of honour*, Cleomenes pointed out that 'this Fear of Shame might be greatly encreas'd by an artful Education, and be made superiour even to that of Death'.¹³³ Mandeville's examples of this kind of behaviour were suicide and duelling.¹³⁴ Men learned the basic rules of honour culture 'by conversing with Men of Honour', and by being 'confirm'd in their Pride'. In any 'Affair of a Quarrel', they had 'their Friends to consult', and it was the social pressure from their friends which 'oblige them to obey the Laws of Honour'. It increased their 'Fear of Shame' to the point where it became 'Superiour to the Fear of Death'.¹³⁵ Putting one's life at risk in a duel was the last resort to maintain one's pride and to avoid shame. As soon as a man started 'to put an inestimable Value upon himself', he had 'to live up to the Rules of Honour' and could 'suffer no Affront'.¹³⁶ On the one hand, Mandeville's argument followed from his conception of horizontal honour. On the other hand, he can be seen arguing against Peter de la Court, who strongly insisted that 'reason alone teaches us, that we, on account of what others think or speak of us, are not in our selves either better or worse; and that therefore Shame or Dishonour ought not so much to be fear'd'.¹³⁷

Nevertheless, it could still be asked why affront was resented and shame avoided by a challenge to a duel rather than some other means. Mandeville argued that there were specific historical reasons for this, of which more anon, but there were, he also argued, other reasons as well. As early as no. 80 of *The Female Tatler*, published in January 1710, Mandeville provided a tentative answer to this question. The Oxford gentleman argued there that as well as being 'Lovers of Self-Preservation' men were 'great Admirers of Praise'. A man won admiration and praise by those actions which were done against his own private interest. But since this was ultimately impossible men tried both 'to make others believe that his

¹³² Ibid., II, p. 92.

¹³³ Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 40.

¹³⁴ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 209–10.

¹³⁵ Ibid., II, pp. 123–4.

¹³⁶ Ibid., I, p. 192.

¹³⁷ [Court], *Fables moral and political*, II, p. 386.

own Benefit is not the only thing he aims at' and to hide the satisfaction received from being praised. But 'stifling the Satisfaction they feel in being praised' was extremely difficult, and therefore the most 'infallible' way of 'commanding Praise' was 'to act so contrary to our Interest, and [to] take such uncommon Pains for some Publick Good, that no body can reasonably think the purchase of all the Praise in the World to be worth the Trouble'. Mandeville's example in *The Female Tatler* was schoolboys who, by standing in 'a great Puddle of Water', 'establish'd Reputation among all their School-Fellows'. They did this by both getting their shoes wet, which was very irksome, and by getting whipped by their teacher, which was obviously no less irksome. The conclusion the Oxford gentleman reached was obvious and directly relevant to duelling as well. Performing acts which were so plainly against one's self-interest brought them 'Praise and Admiration'. For the Oxford gentleman these praises and admirations were mere 'Bubbles', and there was thus something very inconsistent in all this. 'Such', he argued, 'are the Charms of Praise to some, tho' the desire of it proceeds Originally from a Principle of pleasing themselves, that the eagerness of pursuing their Pleasures, makes them so far forget themselves as to destroy the very Being they strive to please at first.'¹³⁸

Four years later, when he published the first part of *The fable*, Mandeville developed the argument even further. The only way a man could demonstrate his exalted sense of pride – or what Mandeville eventually called self-liking – was to prefer it to self-love or self-preservation. But this could only be done by jeopardising life. This was the process in which men were made courageous and the principle of valour was inculcated in their minds. According to Mandeville, 'true Valour' was artificial and consisted 'in a Superlative Horror against Shame, by Flattery Infused into Men of exalted Pride'.¹³⁹ It was mainly used to induce men to fight war, but it was exactly this same process which underlay duelling.

Mandeville returned to this theme in the second dialogue of the second part of *The fable*, which focused on duelling. Cleomenes posed the question: 'But what is it, pray, that so suddenly disposes a courteous sweet-temper'd Man, for so small an Evil, to seek a Remedy of that extreme Violence? but above all, what is it, that buoys up and supports him against the Fear of Death? for there lies the greatest Difficulty.'¹⁴⁰ This prompted a long debate between Horatio and Cleomenes, and it

¹³⁸ *The Female Tatler* no. 80 (6 January 1710). For an earlier example of a strikingly similar line of argument see H[ead], *Proteus Redivivus*, pp. 158–9.

¹³⁹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 210; see in general, pp. 208–10. ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, II, p. 82.

took some time for Cleomenes to persuade his interlocutor. Finally, however, he was able to demonstrate that duellists resisted all the legal and religious objections because their honour or self-liking – their ‘Love of Praise’ – and thus their fear of shame was stronger than their self-love – fear of death. Cleomenes told Horatio who had himself fought a duel in his youth that

the Struggle in your Breast was between the Fear of Shame and the Fear of Death; had this latter not been so considerable, your Struggle would have been less: Still the first conquered, because it was strongest; but if your Fear of Shame had been inferior to that of Death, you would have reason’d otherwise, and found out some Means or other to have avoided Fighting.¹⁴¹

In order to be taken as a man of honour, a gentleman had to prefer his self-liking before his self-love. This meant that whatever was deemed to touch his honour must be of greater importance for him than anything else in his life, including his life itself. As Cleomenes again explained to Horatio,

A Man of Honour must fear nothing: Do but consider every Obstacle, which this Principle of Self-Esteem has conquer’d at one Time or other; and then tell me whether it must not be something more than Magick, by the Fascination of which, a Man of Taste and Judgment, in Health and Vigour, as well as the Flower of his Age, can be tempted and actually drawn from the Embraces of a Wife he loves, and the Endearments of hopeful Children, from polite Conversation and the Charms of Friendship, from the fairest Possessions and the happy Enjoyment of all wordly Pleasures, to an unwarrantable Combat, of which the Victor must be exposed, either to an ignominious Death or perpetual Banishment.¹⁴²

Horatio claimed that, besides these considerations of honour and shame, there were ‘real and substantial Mischiefs which a Man may draw upon himself, by misbehaving in Point of Honour’. These included ruining one’s fortunes or hopes of preferment; if an officer put up with an insult he would immediately be taken as ‘a Coward’ and his career would be destroyed. Cleomenes had no time for such considerations; they were ‘altogether out of the Question’. What was at stake in an impending duel was nothing but honour and shame – nothing ‘but the bare Opinion of Men’.¹⁴³ This also explained why in sickness or storm the fear of death was ‘so glaringly conspicuous’, but in a duel the same was ‘entirely well hid’. It was ‘their Pride’ which assisted the duellists ‘in concealing the fear of Death’.¹⁴⁴ Duelling only appertained to questions of honour and politeness, pride and shame.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., II, p. 92.¹⁴² Ibid., II, pp. 94–5.¹⁴³ Ibid., II, pp. 95–6.¹⁴⁴ Ibid., II, pp. 96–7.

Although Mandeville had thus explained the *raison d'être* of duelling, he also insisted that it could be explained in historical terms. According to him, duelling was a human rather than a natural institution and there could be other means of demonstrating that one's self-liking overrode one's self-love. As Cleomenes put it, 'the fear of Shame in general is a matter of Caprice, that varies with Modes and Customs, and may be fix'd on different Objects, according to the different Lessons we have receiv'd, and the Precepts we are imbued with'.¹⁴⁵ So, how had duelling been established?

Of course, as many opponents of duelling kept pointing out, there had been no duels in ancient Greece or Rome. But for Mandeville, this clearly demonstrated that the level of politeness in Greece or Rome must have been far below that of the early eighteenth century. In *The Female Tatler* when Colonel Worthy viewed duelling as a necessary evil, Emilia responded that 'none had been more Renown'd for Courage, than the *Greeks* and *Romans*, and yet that their Magnanimity had always been above resenting Words and petty Injuries'. But, according to Colonel Worthy, this only demonstrated 'that in those Ages Conversation was not so much refin'd as it is in ours'.¹⁴⁶ Exactly the same point was repeated in *The fable*. 'Some grave People tell us', Mandeville ironically pointed out, 'that the *Greeks* and *Romans* were such valiant Men, and yet knew nothing of Duelling but in their Country's Quarrel: This is very true, but for that Reason the Kings and Princes in *Homer* gave one another worse Language than our Porters and Hackney Coachmen would be able to bear without Resentment.'¹⁴⁷ Not only was duelling an integral part of politeness; it was duelling which had in fact made its progress possible. William Thomas had argued in the 1540s that the courtesy he had witnessed in Italy was mostly due to their duelling code and many had followed suit. Similarly, Mandeville maintained that the high level of politeness in the early eighteenth century could be accounted for in large part by the prevalence of duelling.

Rather than being classical in origin, duelling and the adjacent notion of honour were partly medieval, partly modern. There had been two crucial moments in history which had given a strong impetus for these institutions to develop. First, approximately 'these Seven or Eight Hunderd Years' ago 'Honour and Religion' had been 'blended together'.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 95.

¹⁴⁶ *The Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709); cf. no. 59 (18 November 1709), which was not written by Mandeville.

¹⁴⁷ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 219.

This had occurred when 'the Church of *Rome*', in 'enslaving the Laity' and thus establishing its secular authority, had founded 'the various Orders of Knighthood . . . to defend the Temporals of the Church'. In order to accomplish this, the church had reconciled, 'in outward Shew, the Principle of Honour with that of the Christian Religion'.¹⁴⁸ Soon this notion of honour had generally been accepted. 'As all Gentlemen were train'd up to Arms', Cleomenes told Horatio, 'the Notions of Honour were of great Use to them; and it was manifest, that never any Thing had been invented before, that was half so effectual to create artificial Courage among Military Men.'¹⁴⁹

Mandeville emphasised that 'Courage and Intrepidity always were, and ever will be the grand Characteristick of a Man of Honour'. It followed that the only way in which a man of honour could demonstrate himself as a man of honour was his readiness to fight. As Cleomenes put it, 'he may pick a Quarrel, and shew, that he dares to Fight when he pleases, especially if he converses with Men of the Sword'. Mandeville could thus form a general rule: 'Where the Principle of Honour was in high Esteem, Vanity and Impatience must have always prompted the most proud and forward to seek after Opportunities of Signaling themselves, in order to be stiled Men of Honour.'¹⁵⁰

In order to buttress the link between religion and honour and thereby courage, the medieval church had established several institutions, amongst which had been the ordeal. As Mandeville put it, 'to make accused Persons, sometimes by Ordeal, at others by single Combat, try the Justice of their Cause, were both Arrows out of her [i.e. the church's] Quiver'. It was from these medieval origins of trial by combat that the modern duel had been developed.¹⁵¹

Nevertheless, although Mandeville thus argued that duelling and the underlying notion of honour were essentially medieval in origin, he also stressed the great differences between the medieval concept of honour and trial by combat on the one hand and the 'modern Honour' and duelling on the other. First, the notion of honour had undergone a thorough transformation. 'The Principle of Honour in the beginning of the last Century', Mandeville declared in the first part of *The fable*, 'was melted over again, and brought to a new Standard.' By the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, medieval knights, their 'Order of Chivalry' and their many virtues had 'been laid aside'. According to the medieval 'Rules of Honour', a man of honour had had 'to be faithful to his Trust,

¹⁴⁸ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 46–51.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

to prefer the publick interest to his own, not to tell lies, nor defraud or wrong any Body, and from others to suffer no Affront'. But there were very few, if any, such 'Men of Ancient Honour' who observed all these laws. Mandeville reckoned that '*Don Quixote*' had been 'the last upon Record' of these knights. By the beginning of the seventeenth century honour included 'the same Weight of Courage, half the Quantity of Honesty, and a very little Justice, but not a Scrap of any other Virtue'. This had not meant any decrease in the value and importance of honour. On the contrary, honour was still nothing less than 'the strongest and noblest Tye of Society'. But it did mean that the modern men of honour had given up all the former rules of honour except one; they seemed, as Mandeville pointed out, 'to be more remiss; they have a profound Veneration for the last' rule only – 'to suffer no Affront'.¹⁵²

Secondly, alongside the transformation of the notion of honour, the duel had gone through an equally complete modification. Trials by combat, Mandeville claimed, 'were only fought by Persons of great Quality'. Moreover, the combats had been fought publicly 'with great Pomp', and with leave from the prince. From these trials by combat, however, a modern duel of honour had gradually evolved. 'But as the Principle of Honour', Mandeville argued, 'came to be very useful, the Notions of it, by Degrees, were industriously spread among the Multitude, till at last all Swords-men took it in their Heads, that they had a Right to decide their own Quarrels, without asking any Body's Leave.'¹⁵³ At the same time as the concept of honour had been modified, 'Duelling was made a Fashion'. This had given arise to a further refinement in both duelling and honour – to 'the Point of Honour'. This concept became 'a common Topick of Discourse among the best bred Men'.

Mandeville argued that once the notion of 'the Point of Honour' had been invented a way was open to both modern sophisticated politeness and the modern refined duel of honour. By the means of the point of honour, he maintained, 'the Rules for Quarrelling and Punctilio in Behaviour, which at first were very uncertain and precarious, came to

¹⁵² Ibid., I, pp. 218, 199; II, 57; Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 84, 89. In *The Female Tatler*, no. 84 (16 January 1710) Mandeville had written that, 'a Man of Honour' placed himself and the whole 'Fraternity of Honour' above the law and was thus ready to fight a duel. But he was also 'in his way a punctual observer of Justice, he pays a profound Veneration to all Religious Matters, and a blind Obedience to the Government he serves; he never denies a just Debt, repays as soon as it is in his Power whatever he borrows, and never speaks against his Conscience, tho' his Life was at Stake. The Laws of Friendship he keeps inviolably, and the Honour of your Wife, your Sister or your Daughter, nay your Mistress too, tho the Women were never so forward themselves, if once he undertakes the Trust is always safely committed to his Care.'

¹⁵³ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 51–2.

be better understood, and refin'd upon from Time to Time'. A new level of politeness had been reached 'in the Beginning of the last Century'. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Mandeville declared with a direct reference to one of the most provocative claims of earlier duelling manuals, 'the Sense of Honour was arrived to such a Degree of Nicety all over *Europe*, especially in *France*, that barely looking upon a Man was often taken for an Affront'.¹⁵⁴

But the progress of politeness and honour had not stopped in the early seventeenth century. Compared with the level of civility in his own times the early seventeenth century almost paled into insignificance. The great difference between the early seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century was best captured by an example. In the 1640s Cromwell had still used religion as a means to make his men brave and thus good soldiers. He had therefore endeavoured 'to make them Bigots'. Yet, had he lived 'three or four score Years later', religion would not have been his method of creating good soldiers. Rather, he would have 'endeavoured to make all his Soldiers dancing Masters'. 'What in *Oliver's Days*', Cleomenes concluded, 'was intended by a Mask of Religion and a Shew of Sanctity, is now aim'd at by the Height of Politeness, and a perpetual Attachment to the Principle of modern Honour.' The uppermost rung of the development of politeness had thus been reached in early eighteenth-century Europe. Cleomenes went on to describe the culture of politeness of his own days: 'There is a Spirit of Gentility introduced among military Men, both Officers and Soldiers, of which there was yet little to be seen in the last Century, in any Part of *Europe*, and which now shines through all their Vices and Debaucheries.'¹⁵⁵ A consequence of all this was clearly that rather than being a remnant of medieval knightly culture, duelling was an essential part of the modern culture of honour and politeness.

Duelling had a long pedigree in medieval history but it had come into being with 'modern Honour' in the sixteenth century. It was, Mandeville argued, not only an essential part of the culture of civility and politeness; it had only occurred when politeness had reached an exceptionally high level. Mandeville thus wholeheartedly agreed with the entire tradition of theatrical courtesy and civility where duelling had been highly esteemed and had always been seen as its integral part. Of course we could say, as Mandeville pointed out in *An enquiry into the causes of the frequent executions at Tyburn*, that it was 'perverse and miserable' to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 63–4.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 232.

‘applaud a Person’s Intrepidity in fighting a Duel, when in the Act itself, we see him willfully violate the Laws of God and Man’. Nevertheless, this kind of reasoning was ‘overpower’d by the irresistible Clamour of the fashionable World’.¹⁵⁶

Duelling was an essential part of the world of politeness, and thus of court society. It was, in fact, duelling which made the progress of politeness possible. Mandeville’s critics found this conclusion impossible to accept. It was simply ‘to contradict both Reason and Experience’, said George Blewitt.¹⁵⁷ A fine example of Mandeville’s train of thought is to be found in the story of Dorante in *The virgin unmask’d*. Dorante, ‘a Man well-born, and well bred’, had resided in court in an age when ‘Valour and good Humour’ were the only virtues allowed. When he had been caught in two quarrels, he had showed not only ‘much Bravery and Evenness of Temper’, but also ‘Knowledge, in Point of Honour and good Breeding’. Dorante’s success in these duels against well-known men had procured him great ‘Applause’ and ‘no small Reputation’ which within a year had resulted in him having ‘a general Acquaintance at *Whitehall*’, and being ‘every where esteem’d, and well receiv’d’.¹⁵⁸

Because duelling was a crucial part of politeness and the fashion – because it was governed by ‘the fashionable Rules of manly Honour’¹⁵⁹ – it was a necessity imposed on anyone who tried to belong to the *beau monde*. This was of course Mandeville’s chief point against the critics of duelling. They had claimed that the duellists had ‘mistaken Notions’ and rules of honour. But this claim, Mandeville argued, was nothing less than complete nonsense: ‘You may as well deny that it is the Fashion what you see every body wear, as to say that demanding and giving Satisfaction is against the Laws of true Honour.’¹⁶⁰ If a man wanted to be fashionable, he had to wear what most men were wearing; *mutatis mutandis*, if he wanted to appear honourable, he had to comply with the prevalent rules of honour. What counted as fashion and honour depended thus on the current custom. As Horatio acknowledged, ‘Duelling is a Sin; and unless a Man is forced to it by Necessity, I believe, a mortal one’; and yet, ‘you may blame the rigorous Laws of Honour and the Tyranny of Custom, but a Man that will live in the World must and is bound to obey them’.¹⁶¹ The breaking of the rules of honour and fashion would not only result

¹⁵⁶ Bernard Mandeville, *An enquiry into the causes of the frequent executions at Tyburn* (London, 1725), pp. 31–2.

¹⁵⁷ [Blewitt], *An enquiry*, p. 73.

¹⁵⁸ Bernard Mandeville, *The virgin unmask’d: or, female dialogues* (1709), 5th edn (London, 1757), pp. 62–4.

¹⁵⁹ Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 124.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I, p. 219; II, pp. 92–3.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 87.

in placing oneself outside the *beau monde*; it would also end in being 'the Jest and Scorn of Publick-Houses, Stage Coaches, and Market-Places'; it would make the man 'a common Laughing-stock'.¹⁶²

Little wonder that honour had such a crucial role in human society – that it was 'the strongest and noblest Tye of Society'. But if honour was the most solid cement which held society together, Christianity was much less important in the same process. Like many earlier advocates of duelling, Mandeville admitted that duelling was 'directly opposite to and clashing with the Laws of God'. Indeed men knew that duelling was against religion, law and prudence. But this knowledge, as Horatio was able to explain by his own experience, could not prevent them from fighting. True, it was 'a great Sin' to kill a man; and of course, 'all prudent Men ought to avoid the Occasion, as much as it is in their Power'. Horatio was even willing to admit that 'he is highly blameable who is the first Aggressor and gives the Affront; and whoever enters upon it out of Levity, or seeks a Quarrel out of Wantonness, ought to be hang'd'. But all these considerations turned out to be useless as soon as a man was in a situation where a duel was the only honourable way out. 'When it [i.e. a duel] is forc'd upon one', Horatio emphasised, 'all the Wisdom in the World cannot teach him how to avoid it.' This conclusion was borne out by Horatio's own experience. As he told Cleomenes, 'I shall never forget the Reluctancy I had against it; but Necessity has no Law.'¹⁶³ Honour easily overrode the rules of religion; whoever would decline a duel on religious grounds 'would be laugh'd at'.¹⁶⁴

Mandeville's insistence that a duel was a necessity might yield a picture of a necessary evil. Of course, from an individual's point of view this could be the case, but from the whole society's point of view, far from being an unavoidable nuisance duelling played a highly important beneficial role. Underlying this was the equally advantageous nature of civility and honour. 'The Invention of Honour', Cleomenes told Horatio, had been both of 'much later Date' than that of virtue, and 'the greater Achievement by far'. Men were much 'better paid for their Adherence to Honour' than 'for their Adherence for Virtue'. It followed that 'the Invention of Honour has been far more beneficial to the Civil Society'.¹⁶⁵

First, duelling was an invaluable help in creating a good army. In *The Female Tatler*, the Oxford gentleman, having emphasised the man of

¹⁶² Ibid., II, p. 88. ¹⁶³ Ibid., II, pp. 83–4, 87–8.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., II, p. 83; Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 76, 79–80, 81; *The Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709).

¹⁶⁵ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 43–4.

honour's proneness to duelling, argued that 'nothing is more necessary to the State than Men of Honour, and no Society could be long flourishing without'. The main benefit a society reaped from its men of honour was security; men of honour were always ready to defend their country. By maintaining 'their Ridiculous Notions' of honour, 'the Politician' had 'admirably' succeeded in maintaining their willingness to die for their *patria*.¹⁶⁶

Secondly, and more importantly, duelling played a vital role in the progress of civility and politeness. In *The fable*, Mandeville employed this argument in defence of duelling. Of course, he could 'pity the Unfortunate whose Lot' duelling was. But he added that 'those that rail at Duelling don't consider the Benefit the Society receives from that Fashion'. Just like many earlier defenders of duelling, Mandeville maintained that the greatest benefit society would reap from duelling was a highly enhanced level of politeness in general and of civil conversation in particular. 'If every ill-bred Fellow', he declared, 'might use what Language he pleas'd, without being called to an Account for it, all Conversation would be spoil'd.' It was thus not so much the actual duel itself, but rather the fear of it that 'civilizes a Man'. Thousands of gentlemen all over Europe, Mandeville surmised, 'would have been insolent and insupportable Coxcombs without it; besides if it was out of Fashion to ask Satisfaction for Injuries which the law cannot take hold of, there would be twenty times the Mischief done there is now'. Of course, duelling in itself was terrible – 'it is a Calamity to the People, and generally the Families it falls upon'. Yet, 'there can be no perfect Happiness in this World', and much more importantly, the few casualties – 'half a dozen Men sacrific'd in a Twelvemonth' – was a negligible price to be paid for 'so valuable a Blessing as the Politeness of Manners, the Pleasure of Conversation, and the Happiness of Company in general'.¹⁶⁷ In *The Female Tatler*, Mandeville had written that 'the strict Observance of the point of Honour . . . is a necessary Evil, and a large Nation can no more be call'd Polite without it'. The following issue of the paper, though not written by Mandeville, reiterated exactly the same point even more succinctly: '*Duelling* was necessary in a Polite Nation.'¹⁶⁸

The idea of honour and its obligation 'to resent Injuries and accept of Challenges' were thus 'instrumental to the civilizing Mankind, who

¹⁶⁶ *The Female Tatler*, no. 84 (16 January 1710).

¹⁶⁷ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 219–20. That duelling was an essential part of politeness, explains why such elaborate rules were applied in it: 'the Fine Gentleman . . . behaves himself with the utmost Gallantry', *ibid.*, II, p. 82.

¹⁶⁸ *The Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709); no. 53 (4 November 1709).

in great Societies would soon degenerate into cruel Villains and treacherous Slaves, were Honour to be removed from among them'.¹⁶⁹ When Cleomenes and Horatio returned to this passage in the third dialogue of the second part of *The fable*, Horatio pointed out that it clearly demonstrated that the custom of duelling did 'polish and brighten Society in general' and that it 'contributes to the Politeness of Manners and Pleasure of Conversation'.¹⁷⁰ But Colonel Worthy had already reached the same conclusion in *The Female Tatler*. He 'had duely weigh'd whatever had been said against Duelling, but that he cou'd not conceive how the Conversation, as it is now establish'd among the better sort of People, could be upheld if the Customs of it was totally abolish'd'.¹⁷¹

Although Mandeville gave his unqualified support for duelling, he briefly considered the possibility of prohibiting it. Consistent with his theory of politeness and duelling, he argued that the only way to abolish duelling would be to replace it by a different but similar social institution. Just like Bacon, Mandeville recognised 'the Difficulty . . . that they would abolish the Custom of Duelling without parting with the Notions of Honour'.¹⁷² But of course his solution was the opposite of Bacon's. Because Mandeville believed in the beneficial nature of the point of honour, he wanted to retain it even if duelling had been repealed. In *The Female Tatler* he wrote that the best way to stop the actual duels but to retain their deterrent effect would be to inflict automatic capital punishment on every mortal duel. Mandeville wrote that 'nothing will more effectually prevent a Man from giving the first Offence, than the certainty of the Punishment, which he is to expect, tho he Conquers'.¹⁷³

Furthermore, from Mandeville's point of view the French attempts to replace duelling by a court of honour with very strict rules 'touching the Satisfactions and Reparations of Honour' were the only conceivable solution, and he described them in detail in *An enquiry into the origin of honour*.¹⁷⁴ Just like the earl of Northampton, Mandeville insisted that the court of honour must never be presided over by 'Lawyers or Mechanics' who could not have an intimate knowledge of 'the Point of Honour'.¹⁷⁵ But he also claimed that all the religious arguments included in the French edicts had been put there 'for Form's Sake', because a court

¹⁶⁹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 218–19. ¹⁷⁰ Ibid., II, pp. 101–2.

¹⁷¹ *The Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709). Cf. no. 80 (6 January 1710) where Colonel Worthy linked men of honour and 'the most civiliz'd and refin'd' conversation, but contrasted this with 'the Impertinence of Fops'.

¹⁷² Mandeville, *Honour*, p. 65. ¹⁷³ *The Female Tatler* no. 52 (2 November 1709).

¹⁷⁴ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 65–78.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 67–8. Cf. *The Female Tatler*, no. 59 (18 November 1709), which was not written by Mandeville.

of honour entailed exactly the same notion of honour as duelling and was thus directly against Christianity.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, 'modern Honour' was 'directly opposite to Religion'.¹⁷⁷

DUELLING, POLITENESS AND COMMERCIAL SOCIETY

There should be little question that Mandeville's notions of duelling and politeness have a direct impact on our account of his theory of contemporary commercial society. Perhaps scholars no longer see Mandeville as the ideological forefather of modern capitalism, but they nevertheless argue, as we have seen, that his world of private vices and public benefits, commerce and luxury was far removed from the courtly culture of civility and politeness. Scholars have insisted that for Mandeville as for many of his contemporaries there was an unbridgeable gap dividing the court from town and thus the courtier from the merchant. Such a juxtaposition between the court and the courtier on the one hand, and the town and the merchant on the other often surfaced in contemporary arguments. The author Edward Phillips noted that civility gave 'proper grace to a Courtier' but 'would cause derision if presented by a Merchant or a Factor'.¹⁷⁸ Saint-Evremond could argue that

the only Study in the Courts of Princes is how to please, because a Man makes his Fortune there by being Agreeable. This is the reason why Courtiers are so Polite. On the contrary, in Towns and Republicks where Men are forced to take pains to get their Living, the last of their Cares is to please and this it is that makes them so Clownish.¹⁷⁹

In *The Female Tatler* Mandeville seemed to express similar views. Merchants could easily lay aside polite conversation, and the point of honour did not detain them. Far otherwise was the case with the *beau monde*, for whom sociability formed its own end. As Colonel Worthy put it,

among the Quality and Gentry it is the tie of Civility, where Persons that have no manner of Business together, or Dependance upon one another, meet for Society's sake: where by Common Consent, every one obliges himself to live up

¹⁷⁶ Mandeville, *Honour*, pp. 65–78, quotation, p. 73. [Blewitt], *An enquiry*, pp. 75–82, wholeheartedly concurred.

¹⁷⁷ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 221–2.

¹⁷⁸ E[dward] P[hillips], *The mysteries of love & eloquence, or, the arts of wooing and complementing*, 3rd edn (London, 1685), sig. a4^{r-v}. See also Boyer, *Characters*, p. 30; Callières, *The courtier's calling*, p. 216; S. C., *The art of complaisance*, pp. 73–4.

¹⁷⁹ Saint-Evremond, *The works*, II, p. 426. In *The Spectator*, no. 218, II, p. 350, Steele argued that 'the Trader was the most unhappy of all men', because he could not defend his 'reputation' or 'credit' by 'Fire or Sword'.

to the strict Rules of good Breeding, that is, stifling the real Sentiments of his Heart not to Covet, or relish at least to outward appearance, any Pleasure but what may be supposed equally diverting to all.¹⁸⁰

But Mandeville's overall theory of politeness implied a radically different account. Sociability required theatrical civility which in its turn depended on the theory of the point of honour and duelling. Moreover, there is little doubt that in Mandeville's analysis it was precisely the *beau monde*, the polite, who were distinguished from the rest of the society not only by their extravagant behaviour and conversation but also by their equally extravagant consumption. It is hardly original to argue that, according to Mandeville, the private vices of the *beau monde* produced public benefits for the society at large. But if this was so then the entire theory of politeness, far from being antithetical to the commercial world, made it in fact possible. There was, in brief, a paved way from court society via politeness and luxury to commercial society.

There was an exceptionally close link between politeness and luxury. Mandeville emphasised this connection in both *A letter to Dion* and *An enquiry into the origin of honour*. He argued that 'Luxury, tho' depending upon the Vices of Man, is absolutely necessary to render a great Nation formidable, opulent and polite at the same Time'. Indeed, 'the Epithets of polite and flourishing are never given to Countries, before they are arriv'd at a considerable Degree of Luxury'.¹⁸¹ Both luxury and politeness mainly consisted of 'outward Appearance', which was why in ancient Greece and Rome as well as in 'the great Eastern Nations, that flourish'd before them . . . Luxury and Politeness ever grew up together, and were never enjoy'd asunder.'¹⁸² Furthermore, luxury as well as politeness aimed at pleasure and happiness. 'Precepts of good Manners', Mandeville insisted, assisted 'in the Enjoyments of Life, and refining of Pleasure'.¹⁸³ He could conclude that 'Comfort and Delight upon Earth have always employ'd the Wishes of the *Beau Monde*; and that . . . their chief Study and greatest Sollicitude, to outward Appearance, have ever been directed to obtain Happiness in this World.'¹⁸⁴

The proximity of politeness and luxury was not merely due to their similar ends but also to the fact that they were both based on the same

¹⁸⁰ *The Female Tatler*, no. 52 (2 November 1709). See also no. 23 (26 August 1709) where it was argued that a merchant could also be 'Polite' and 'Conversable'; and no. 24 (29 August 1709), where tradesmen were said to be 'always the Jest o' the Court'.

¹⁸¹ Bernard Mandeville, *A letter to Dion, occasion'd by his book call'd Alciphron, or the minute philosopher* (London, 1732), pp. 18–19; *Honour*, p. 205.

¹⁸² Mandeville, *The fable*, II, p. 147.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

human passion – pride. Politeness, as we have already seen, was closely connected with pride, but so were luxury and wealth. In the first part of *The fable*, Mandeville examined the natural faculty of pride and argued that ‘we are possess’d of no other Quality so beneficial to Society, and so necessary to render it wealthy and flourishing as’ pride. Furthermore, pride, together with luxury, were ‘the great Promoters of Trade’.¹⁸⁵ Thus, politeness and luxury, good manners and wealth were all entangled with each other. Luxury, politeness and commerce were parts of the same historical development. Mandeville gave an explanation for this development:

Would you moreover render them [i.e. ‘a Society of Men’] an opulent, knowing and polite Nation, teach ’em Commerce with Foreign Countries, and if possible get into the Sea, which to compass spare no Labour nor Industry, and let no Difficulty deter you from it: Then promote Navigation, cherish the Merchant, and encourage Trade in every Branch of it; this will bring Riches, and where they are, Arts and Sciences will soon follow, and by the Help of what I have named and good Management, it is that Politicians can make a People potent, renown’d and flourishing.¹⁸⁶

But if luxury and politeness were so central to the growth of commercial society, the court, which was a site of both politeness and luxury, must also be equally central to it. In chapter 12, entitled ‘Of national happiness’, of *Free thoughts on religion, the Church, and national happiness*, Mandeville made this clear. Even if the king were frugal, courts, he wrote, ‘must be Places of Pomp and Luxury, stately Academies of all manners of Pleasure and Diversions, where Men learn to excite, as well as to indulge their Appetites, and all the Passions and Sensations are refin’d upon’.¹⁸⁷ It followed that rather than being contrary to the development of commercial society, courts played a crucial role in its development.¹⁸⁸

If politeness and luxury, court and commerce were so closely linked with each other in Mandeville’s theory, it is misleading to juxtapose court society and the society of merchants. Both the polite sphere of courtiers and the commercial sphere of merchants were overlapping, so much so that they could not be kept apart. This emerges most clearly in Mandeville’s discussion of the important role which polite manners had in commercial activities. Mandeville’s point was, in short, that if it would be deceptive to separate politeness and commerce, the sharp distinction between polite courtiers and clownish merchants is equally illusory.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, I, p. 124; cf. II, p. 90.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 184–5.

¹⁸⁷ M[andeville], *Free thoughts*, p. 337.

¹⁸⁸ See also Mandeville, *The fable*, I, pp. 119–23.

The starting point of Mandeville's analysis of civility's role in the world of commerce was the hypocritical nature of all social activity. Because men were utterly selfish, it followed that 'it is impossible we could be sociable Creatures without hypocrisy'. Rather than being social virtues, frankness and openness were unacceptable social vices, because they would hamper all sociability. As Mandeville put it, 'all Civil Commerce would be lost, if by Art and prudent Dissimulation we had not learn'd to hide and stifle' our own thoughts. Moreover, 'if all we think was to be laid open to others in the same manner as it is to our selves, it is impossible that endued with Speech we could be sufferable to one another'.¹⁸⁹ But if polite dissimulation was a *sine qua non* in social life in general, even more so was it in commercial life in particular.¹⁹⁰

In the commercial world, 'the hope of Gain and thoughts of Lucre' dominated men's thoughts. But to Mandeville it was 'a great Pleasure . . . to behold into what various and often strangely opposite Forms' these ends shaped men, 'according to the different Employments they are of'. Those, like 'the Dancing-Master', whose branch of business was 'a well-ordered Ball' appeared 'gay and merry'. Conversely, the undertaker observed 'a solemn Sadness . . . at the Masquerade of a Funeral'. But both the dancing-master and the undertaker were equally 'pleas'd with his Gains'. And yet, the successful conducting of their respective businesses demanded well-performed hypocrisy – 'both are equally tired in their Occupations, and the Mirth of the one is as much forced as the Gravity of the other is affected'.¹⁹¹

While hypocrisy in the examples of the dancing-master and the undertaker was very obvious, Mandeville insisted that the same basic rules of affectation governed all the other commercial activities as well. This could easily be seen in the simple commercial transaction between a draper and his customer. 'Those', Mandeville wrote, 'who have never minded the Conversation of a spruce Mercer, and a young Lady his Customer that comes to his Shop, have neglected a Scene of Life that is very entertaining.' While his sole aim is 'to sell as much Silk as he can at a Price by which he shall get what he proposes to be reasonable', her end was 'to please her Fancy, and buy cheaper' than the silk is normally sold. In order to achieve their contradicting aims, they endeavoured to muster as much civility and politeness as they possibly could. Their already high level of politeness was even further increased by their awareness that it

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., I, p. 349.

¹⁹⁰ For other similar arguments see Klein 1995a, pp. 372–3.

¹⁹¹ Mandeville, *The fable*, I, p. 349.

was purely artificial – or hypocritical – politeness. The young lady thinks not only that ‘she is handsome’ but also that she has ‘a fine Mien and easy Behaviour, and a peculiar Sweetness of Voice’. On the one hand, being in a situation where no ‘thoughts of Love’ interfere, she has ‘more liberty of speaking kindly, and being affable than she can have almost on any other occasion’. On the other hand, she is aware that an ‘abundance of well-bred People come to his Shop, and endeavours to render her self as Amiable as Virtue, and the Rules of Decency allow of’. Nevertheless, she is confident of her success, thinking, as Mandeville so revealingly put it, that she is ‘more agreeable than most young Women she knows’.

If the customer’s behaviour was dominated by the rules of polite behaviour, even more so was that of the ‘spruce Mercer’. His behaviour and exterior, as Mandeville described it, was governed by the central features of civility and politeness. As soon as she came to the shop, she was approached ‘by a Gentleman-like Man’ who had not only ‘everything Clean’ but also ‘Fashionable about him’. He ‘pays her Homage’ ‘in low Obeisance’, and addresses her ‘with a profound Reverence and modish Phrase’. He displays ‘consummate Patience’ and ‘whatever trouble she creates, she is sure to hear nothing but the most obliging Language, and has always before her a chearful Countenance, where Joy and Respect seem to be blended with Good-humour’. Indeed, he can ‘make up an Aritificial Serenity more engaging than untaught Nature is able to produce’. Most importantly, the mercer demonstrates his utmost skills in politeness by never disagreeing with his customer. As Mandeville again so carefully put it, ‘let her say and dislike what she pleases, she can never be directly contradicted’.¹⁹²

The civility of the commercial world was not only governed by rules of agreeable behaviour and conversation; it was also purely artificial civility. But this of course meant that it was exactly the same kind of theatrical politeness which also dominated the court. In Mandeville’s theory of civility and politeness there was no sharp distinction between the politeness of the court and that of the town. Genuine politeness was always both theatrical and artificial in character, and duelling, together with the concomitant notion of honour, was its sole guarantee.

¹⁹² Ibid., I, pp. 349–52.

Epilogue

When Richard Hey wrote in 1784 that ‘arguments . . . in favour of Duelling must be intirely nugatory, even if they can prove that it counteracts the operations of other Vices, or is directly productive of some good Effects’,¹ he was, of course, arguing against Mandeville’s defence of duelling. At the same time, however, Hey also questioned the entire tradition of associating civility and duelling closely together. Throughout the early modern period, from William Thomas to Bernard Mandeville, there was a powerful line of argument which not only linked civility with duelling but also insisted that the duel was a particularly efficient means of both maintaining and even enhancing the level of civility and politeness.

But Hey also understood that underlying the whole theory of the duel was a particular interpretation of civility and politeness. According to this interpretation, civility and politeness only bore on one’s outward appearance and there was no connection between appearance and one’s genuine feelings. On the contrary, as many civility authors had argued, politeness was an efficient means of hiding one’s inner feelings. But this had become a bitterly contested notion when equally many theorists had disputed such an interpretation and had argued in its stead that there must always be a link between external politeness and a man’s inner self. When Hey declared that a ‘Refinement of Manners . . . as an external ornament . . . will spring up as the genuine fruit of Heart’, he was taking the latter side in the dispute.

The particular account of courtesy and civility whose integral part duelling always had been developed in early and mid sixteenth-century Italian court culture, and had quickly spread to Northern Europe, especially to France and England. It always emphasised courtesy and civility ‘as an external ornament’ – as the courtier’s technique of self-representation and at the same time as a means of accommodating his

¹ Hey, *A dissertation on duelling*, pp. 93–4.

behaviour to other courtiers and gentlemen. Civility was a shibboleth which delineated the polite from those outside of their circle. At the same time, it was a reciprocal means of conferring honour. By behaving politely courtiers and gentlemen were said to demonstrate their honour and respect to other courtiers and gentlemen. The notion of honour inherent in this theory was thus strongly horizontal. Such an ideology also entailed, however, that even 'the least Word, Look, or Motion' could easily be taken as undervaluing a gentleman and thus occasioning a challenge. As Anna Bryson has put it, 'a failure to perform a gesture of deference required by the status of another noble or gentleman is not merely a boorish failure of complaisance, but a positive injury to the honour of the other'.² It followed that even the minutest breach of the gentlemanly code of conduct blatantly demonstrated the lack of respect and thus cast serious doubt on the gentleman's honour as long as he did not clear his tarnished reputation by a proper counterattack. This was so because the notion of honour was also reflexive. The duel was, in other words, the only polite response to an impolite word or deed, and thus the only proper means of restoring gentlemanly civility.

Duelling was at the heart of the entire early modern debate about the correct definition of civility and politeness. But its ideological significance extended far beyond that particular dispute. It has often been argued that a chief ideological role of courtesy and civility in early modern Europe was to provide support to the developing strong monarchy. As we have seen, however, its role was far more complicated. Whilst it could be used to buttress a centralised monarchy, the duel's pivotal role in it indicates that this was not necessarily the case. By governing the rivalry between gentlemen and courtiers, duelling could reinforce gentlemanly homogeneity and leave the prince on the periphery of the culture of civility. To a great extent, civility regulated the behaviour of equals and could thus lend credence to arguments for a limited monarchy. Indeed, by the early eighteenth century there had arisen interpretations of civility and duelling which openly challenged the theory of strong monarchy. John Oldmixon and others argued that duelling was one of the indigenous ideological and cultural institutions which supported British freedom.

Another ideological arena to which the tradition of civility and duelling contributed was the embracing of a secular line of argument. Many advocates of duelling argued rather candidly not only that the rules they were laying down were incompatible with the central teachings of

² Anna Bryson 1998, p. 236.

Christianity, but also that the gentleman was always assumed to follow the former rather than the latter, unless, of course, he wanted to appear ridiculous amongst his peers and thus to risk his honour and status. The extent to which this line of argument was accepted is most apparent from the fact that even many of the opponents of the duel acknowledged that Christian principles were singularly inefficient against duelling and that they therefore endeavoured to meet the duelling theory on its own ground of civility.

The relationship between civility and politeness on the one hand and trade and commerce on the other has always been problematic. Two closely related arguments have recently been put forward to account for the emergence of politeness in the early eighteenth century. First, it has been argued that the theory of politeness was developed to describe the necessary characteristics or virtues of commercial people. Whereas ancient republics had relied on the austere virtues of their unpolished and uncorrupt citizens, these qualities had been outmoded by the rise of commercial republics. The discourse of politeness was then carefully constructed as the modern equivalent to the ancient discourse of virtue. 'Commerce was the parent of politeness', as John Pocock has put it.³ Secondly and closely related to this, the politeness of the commercial world has been strictly separated from the civility and politeness of the courtly world.⁴

However, once we recognise the extent to which the early eighteenth-century notion of politeness was a direct continuation of the earlier Renaissance notion of courtesy and civility, such arguments become less tenable.⁵ Court and city were overlapping rather than contradictory sites of civility. Politeness was perhaps seen by some of the early eighteenth-century commentators as the virtue of the commercial people, but it can hardly be said to have been their invention. Some of them, as we have seen, made an attempt to redefine the notion of politeness. But the ultimate aim of this attempt was not to make politeness more compatible with commerce – let alone that politeness had been perceived as a creation of commerce. Most importantly, the strongest case for the close proximity of commerce to politeness depicted politeness as purely theatrical and thus returned to, rather than argued against, its courtly

³ Pocock 1983, p. 241, more generally pp. 240–1; Pocock 1975, p. 470; see also Pocock 1985, pp. 48–50, 114–15, 235–7; Klein 1995b; Barker-Benfield 1992, pp. 85–9; Agnew 1986, p. 175.

⁴ See e.g. Hundert 1994, pp. 73–4, 117–18; Carter 2001, pp. 36–7.

⁵ For particularly pertinent criticism see Anna Bryson 1998, pp. 43–6. See also Heal 1990, pp. 107, 391–2; Slack 2000.

interpretation. According to Mandeville, it was above all the *beau monde*, the polite, who were distinguished by their singularly theatrical politeness and therefore by their propensity to duelling as well as by their extravagant consumption. Indeed, as Mandeville declared, 'Luxury and Politeness ever grew up together.'

Finally, if, as some recent studies suggest, dissimulation and 'a Renaissance notion of prudential self' as 'a rhetorical posture that subordinated honesty to decorum' played a central role in the discovery of the individual and the self in early modern Europe,⁶ this raises a whole new set of questions in relation to the present study. What role, if any, did discussions of civility, dissimulation and flattery, outward appearance, horizontal honour and their defence by duelling play in this debate about the discovery of the individual in early modern Europe? Such questions are beyond the scope of this book but would well reward examination.

There is little doubt that Mandeville's writings had a pivotal role in the traditions of theatrical politeness and duelling. Yet, it would be misleading to assume that they formed the end of the tradition. If we glance further ahead to the eighteenth century, we still meet with an essentially similar analysis of politeness and duelling. David Hume wrote in 1742 that 'the point of *honour*, or duelling, is a modern invention, as well as *gallantry*; and by some esteemed equally useful for refining of manners'.⁷ 'To the effects of duelling', wrote Anne-Pierre Coustard de Massi in the 1760s, 'we owe the characteristic politeness for which we are celebrated throughout Europe, and whence are derived all the charms of society'.⁸ Indeed, duellists were sometimes defended by arguing that rather than being 'desirous of quarrelling', they were 'well behav'd civil complaisant gentlem[c]n'.⁹

When the earl of Chesterfield formulated his theory of politeness he carefully followed this well-trodden path. The aim of civility and politeness, he maintained, was to make 'society easy and agreeable', 'to accommodate and oblige others'.¹⁰ Gentlemen had to be sensitive to the demands of the hierarchy but Chesterfield also recognised that whoever was admitted to gentlemanly society 'is, for the time at least, supposed to

⁶ Martin 1997, citation, p. 1333; Baldwin 2001.

⁷ David Hume, *Essays moral, political, and literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis, 1985), p. 626. I owe this reference to my student Mikko Tolonen.

⁸ Coustard de Massi, *The history of duelling*, p. 93.

⁹ [Clark], *The trial of Capt. Edward Clark*, pp. 14–15. See also Charles Peter Layard, *A poetical essay on duelling* (Cambridge, 1775), pp. 6, 2.

¹⁰ Philip Dormer Stanhope, earl of Chesterfield, *Advice to his son, on men and manners* (Philadelphia, 1781), pp. 40, 76, 41, 62. For Chesterfield's context see Carter 2001, pp. 76–80, 88–9, 10.

be upon a footing of equality with the rest'.¹¹ An agreeable and pleasing exterior was by far the most important quality for a polite gentleman – 'polished brass will pass upon more people than rough gold'. Chesterfield emphasised again and again that 'all acts of civility are, by common consent, understood to be no more than a conformity to custom'.¹² These rules applied both to the gentleman's behaviour and conversation. A highly important argument in Chesterfield's exposition was the centrality of conversation in politeness. One's conversation must always be pleasing and agreeable – always avoiding 'argumentative, polemical conversations'. By this time a neologism for civil conversation had been invented: 'study to acquire that fashionable kind of *small talk* or *chit chat*, which prevails in all polite assemblies'.¹³ And since it was the exterior which was given the sole emphasis, a gentleman's attire was hardly less important than other aspects of his outward appearance.¹⁴ Chesterfield summarised his argument by equating politeness with 'complaisance', and by claiming that it could always cover 'a number of sins'.¹⁵ Indeed, outward politeness or 'good-breeding is, to all worldly qualification, what charity is to all Christian virtues'.¹⁶

It should be no news that Chesterfield's account of insults was equally familiar. Since politeness only concerned our exterior and since it was based on 'vanity and self-love', even the most trifling affront which touched a gentleman's appearance and questioned his status was the most vicious insult; 'wrongs', Chesterfield wrote, 'are often forgiven, but contempt never is'. This was so simply because 'nothing is more insulting, than to take pains to make a man feel a mortifying inferiority'.¹⁷ It was nothing less than 'brutally shocking' when you gave even the smallest sign of 'a seeming inattention to the person who is speaking to you'.¹⁸ How was the gentleman expected to react? 'A well bred man', Chesterfield declared, 'thinks, but never seems to think himself slighted, undervalued, or laughed at in compnay, unless where it is so plainly marked out, that his honour obliges him to resent it in a proper manner.' There were thus 'but two alternatives for a gentleman and a man of parts – extreme politeness, or a duel'.¹⁹

Nor was Chesterfield an odd old fogey. In *The principles of moral and political philosophy* (1785), which was based on his lectures at Christ's College, and which subsequently became a major liberal text-book for the teaching of political theory throughout the nineteenth century, William Paley

¹¹ Chesterfield, *Advice to his son*, pp. 37–8.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 67, 39–40, 41.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–30, 45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 40–1.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–30, 66–7.

accepted duelling as a necessary part of politeness and 'the Law of Honour'. At the outset of the book, Paley defined 'the Law of Honour' as 'a system of rules constructed by people of fashion, and calculated to facilitate their intercourse with one another: and for no other purpose'. The law of honour only concerned 'the duties betwixt equals' and consequently paid attention neither to religion nor to cruelties or injuries committed towards those below the 'people of fashion'. Moreover, it allowed the indulgence of such passions as 'fornication, adultery, drunkenness, prodigality' and, of course, 'duelling'.²⁰

Paley's notion that duels were fought 'to preserve the duellist's own reputation and reception in the world' or 'to recover or preserve the good opinion of the world' was scarcely highly original. He freely admitted that of course duelling appeared unreasonable and unchristian. But he insisted that such considerations must be strictly distinguished from 'the duty and conduct of individuals, whilst such a rule exists'. Prevalent manners or 'public opinion' thus prescribed duelling, and any attempt to obey the rules of reason and Christianity rather than those of the public opinion would bring an awful 'sense of shame' on a gentleman. Paley's conclusion was thus that religious and moral arguments against duelling were largely irrelevant. First, duelling was a means of maintaining one's horizontal honour – 'the duellist' acted 'entirely from a concern for his own reputation'.²¹ Secondly, the law of honour not only ignored Christianity but was also above 'the Law of the Land'.²² As Paley drew the conclusion, 'public opinion is not easily controlled by civil institutions; for which reason I question whether any regulations can be contrived of sufficient force to suppress or change the rule of honour which stigmatises all scruples about duelling with the reproach of cowardice'.²³ Little wonder that the critics of duelling were deeply disappointed by Paley's account.²⁴

The opponents of duelling employed various ideological resources to counter these arguments. The most common ones were to argue that the duel was a blatant breach of the basic commandments of Christianity and that it directly clashed with the king's sovereign power. Nevertheless, many critics understood that these arguments were hardly sufficient especially since some of the advocates of duelling openly dismissed them. The critics, therefore, endeavoured to meet their adversaries on their

²⁰ William Paley, *The principles of moral and political philosophy* (London, 1785), pp. 2–3. For Paley and his liberalism see Skinner 1998, pp. 78, 80–1; Miller 1994, pp. 397–9.

²¹ Paley, *Principles*, pp. 225–8. ²² *Ibid.*, p. 3. ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 227–8.

²⁴ See e.g. Buchan, *Remarks on duelling*, pp. 30–1.

own ground. Those who came more than halfway to meet their adversaries maintained that the easiest and most efficient way of abolishing duelling was to replace it by a court of honour. This was an essentially aristocratic argument against duelling, because it entailed acceptance of the entire theory of civility and honour underlying duelling, but not the duel itself. As I have argued throughout this book, and as some of the critics insisted, this line of argument was always liable to provide intellectual support for duelling itself.

More importantly, throughout the early modern period most of the critics argued against duelling by trying to undermine the entire ideological basis of duelling – the theory of civility. In the early seventeenth century this attempt culminated in a concerted effort to belittle the importance of civility or civil courtesy. Perhaps the most important of these early seventeenth-century critics, Francis Bacon, was convinced that the only means of refuting the duelling theory was to discredit its intellectual basis – the theory of civil courtesy. In the latter part of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, instead of disparaging civility, many critics of duelling endeavoured to redefine it, so much so that it would no longer have lent support for duelling.

It would be tempting to conclude that the disappearance of duelling from Britain by the middle of the nineteenth century saw the final defeat of the account of civility and politeness which had lent credence to it for so long. Such a conclusion was often drawn by the critics of duelling. One of them noted in 1807 that ‘the progress of civilization in society has hitherto tended to diminish the number of ‘challenges and duels’.²⁵ Another critic pointed out in 1823 that ‘if there is any truth in the opinion, that duelling is essential to the maintenance of the courtesy of manners’, then, surely, the custom must have flourished during Louis XIV’s reign. But that had of course been the period ‘when the attempt at entire abolition was begun, carried on, and completed’. It was not, therefore, duelling but Christianity that was ‘the foundation of the only true politeness’.²⁶

But the dichards who still advocated duelling saw things quite differently. An advocate of duelling echoed William Thomas in 1817 when he wrote that ‘men of fine feelings are always the least prone to give offence; though generally the most apt to take it, if insolence, insult, or rudeness, be a concomitant’.²⁷ Although he suggested that a ‘Court of Honour’

²⁵ Grenville, *An essay on duelling*, pp. 24–5.

²⁶ Buchan, *Remarks on duelling*, pp. 15, 54–8.

²⁷ Abraham Bosquett, *The young man of honour’s vade-mecum, being a salutary treatise on duelling* (London, [1817]), p. 22. See also e.g. Samuel Stanton, *The principles of duelling; with rules to be observed in every particular respecting it* (London, 1790).

should be established 'to whom all those differences, productive of duelling, should be referred' and, significantly, praised the Jacobean earl of Northampton's treatise on these matters, he clearly believed in the great civilising powers of the entire culture of 'the punctilio of honour' and duelling. He was far from sure whether an anti-duelling law could 'succeed in the universal abolishment of duelling'. One thing was certain, however. Duelling was the most efficient means to achieve a high degree of politeness. 'I have always found,' he wrote, 'that, in the provinces, districts, and cities, where the decision of differences, by single combat, had most prevailed . . . the gentry were the most polite and friendly, and the middle classes the most civilized and respectful . . . and even the lower classes, tractable and good-natured to excess. Such qualities constitute the true basis of genuine politeness.'²⁸ Indeed, duelling was nothing else than 'a barrier against the encroachments of rudeness and ill breeding' and thus 'the general promoter of politeness, courtesy, and good manners'. Abolishing duelling would thus endanger 'all the pleasures of social and agreeable intercourse' and would turn them into 'gross freedoms and habits of incivility'.²⁹

In 1829 Joseph Hamilton called England 'the Land of Duel',³⁰ and Andrew Steinmetz, publishing his two volumes on the history of duelling under the title *The romance of duelling in all times and countries* in 1868, agreed. 'In no country, France excepted,' he wrote with an obvious sense of pride, 'has duelling been more in vogue than in England and Ireland.'³¹ Steinmetz's estimate was not based on the actual number of duels – he freely acknowledged that 'duelling happens but seldom among us, in comparison with other countries'³² – but rather on the benefits England had reaped from it. What had these benefits of duelling been? Steinmetz referred to the authority of Mandeville and exclaimed: 'The dread of being called to a personal account keeps abundance of people in awe; and there are now many thousands of mannerly and well-accomplished gentlemen in Europe who would have turned out very insolent and very unsupportable coxcombs, without so salutary a curb to keep under restraint their naturally irruptive petulance.' Of course, 'modern honour and its favourite principle, the spirit of duelling' was 'diametrically opposed to the forgiving meekness of Christianity'. Nonetheless, as soon

²⁸ Bosquett, *The young man*, pp. 23, 38–9, 21. ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁰ Joseph Hamilton, *The only approved guide through all the stages of a quarrel* (London, 1829), p. 3. See also [anon.], *The British code of duel: a reference to the laws of honour, and the character of gentleman* (London, 1824).

³¹ Andrew Steinmetz, *The romance of duelling in all times and countries* (2 vols., London, 1868), 1, p. vi.

³² *Ibid.*, 1, p. 4.

as ‘the spirit of duelling’ was lost, the consequences would be drastic. Steinmetz was convinced that ‘whenever it shall become unfashionable to demand a manly satisfaction for such injuries received as the law cannot take hold of’, the number of either mischiefs or that of constables will increase ‘twenty-fold’.³³

Since Steinmetz was clearly aware that duelling had already disappeared from England, the question he was left with was, surely, why these drastic consequences had not taken place in England. Why, in other words, had the extinction of duelling not brought about a dramatic increase in mischiefs and impolitenesses? Steinmetz’s answer was simple: despite the fact that ‘we have succeeded in “putting down” the practice’ of duelling, ‘the spirit of duelling’ is not ‘quite dead among us’.³⁴ From Steinmetz’s perspective, duelling had thus finally achieved its ultimate aim of civilising men. Rather than having been overcome by its opponents, duelling had made itself redundant. Therefore, far from demonstrating the extirpation of the kind of politeness which throughout its history duelling had been said to guarantee, the disappearance of duelling, in fact, betokened for its advocates the definitive victory of such politeness – ‘the spirit of duelling’.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 4–5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. vi.

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